

NATION-BUILDING

THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF CENTRAL ASIA: DECLARATIONS, SPECIFICS, AND PROJECTS

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When writing about his mainly positive attitude toward the Industrial Revolution in England and French Utopian Socialism, Ahmad Donish (1827-1897), an outstanding Central Asian diplomat, never suspected that this would make him the region's first social-democratic agitator. Later, socialist ideas "in bad Turkish translations" (as Donish's pupils and followers asserted) were actively promoted in the Central Asian khanates. One can say that this ideology and the social-political movement of the Turkestan, Bukhara, and Khiva workers who readily embraced it are over 100 years old.¹

¹ Many of the local parties agree with this (see, for example: "Za novy Kazakhstan! Predvybornaia programma OSDPK," 18 July, 2007, available at [www.osdp.kz]); as well as bits and pieces from an interview by R. Zoiirov, leader of the Tajik Social-Democrats, quoted below).

How has the movement changed over the last 100 years? How should we treat the rich social-democratic history in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union and "developed socialism?" How are the social-democratic parties of Central Asia developing in the context of the world financial crisis? What are their prospects? What can be said about their leaders (P. Zoiirov, Zh. Tuiakbai, G. Kaliev, and others)?

It is not my intention to answer all these questions; I shall concentrate on the key issues using the largest and influential social-democratic organizations as an example. I have in mind the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (leader—L. Guliamov, 310,000 members); the National Social-Democratic Party of Kazakhstan (NSDPK) (Zh. Tuiakbai, 140,000 members); the Social-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (SDPU)

Adolat (I. Saifnazarov, 90,000 members); the Kazakhstan Social-Democratic Party Auyl (G. Kaliev, 61,000 members); the Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan (SDPT) (R. Zoirov, 5,000 members); the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (SDPK, A. Atambaev, 5,000 members), and some others.²

There is a fairly limited number of works by prominent Central Asian authors dealing with the subject under discussion. I relied mainly on those that looked at the local social-democrats during the most difficult periods of the region's recent history: 1990, 1993, and 1998. The latter, which coincided with the Asian economic crisis, deserves special attention in connection with the latest developments. The *Central Asia and the Caucasus* journal has carried articles on the multi-party system, political parties, and the social-democratic movement by R. Abdullo, I. Ba-

girov, M. Bekker, Kh. Hajji-zade, I. Ismagambetov, I. Kar-sakov, G. Kerian, V. Kurganskaia, A. Kur-dov, E. Mamytova, M. Mashanov, P. Mullojanov, R. Musabekov, S. Olimova, M. Sabit, A. Tuleg-lov, B. Fakhritdinov, R. Yalchin, and others.

It is not easy to identify common features among the fundamental issues (such as organiza-tional, personnel, legal, material, financial, agita-tion, and propaganda) of the region's social-dem-ocratic organizations. They are distorted by local conditions and the authorities' fairly strong pres-sure on the political parties; the social-political and socio-economic models are different; the same applies to the leaders' political tactics. Still, there are obviously common, "core" strategic positions shared by all the parties enumerated above: social justice, past socialist traditions, common centuries-old Muslim values, more or less similar electorates, respect for state regula-tion, respect for the achievements and the author-ity of social democracy of Northern Europe and, finally, a constructive attitude toward the world financial crisis and the measures designed to neu-tralize the damage.

² The Socialist Party of Kazakhstan, the Orleu Public Movement of Kazakhstan, the Agrarian Labor Party of Kyrgyzstan, and certain others deserve special historical study.

Social Justice as a Common Core

It should be said that the Central Asian leaders were not alone when they armed themselves with the social justice slogan as an element of the social-democratic ideology of today. They are in the good company of the present and former heads of state: H. Mubarak (Egypt), T. Basescu (Rumania), D. Türk (Slovakia), V. Zatlers (Latvia); G. Pyrvanov (Bulgaria), R. von Weizsäcker (Germany), and others. Zbigniew Brzezinski has described social justice as a factor for restoring American domination.³ Grigory Yavlinsky writes about it as a "road map for reform"⁴ while the British Guardian stated: "Liberalism without social justice is not a political program in the democratic age ... nor ... is social justice without liberalism."⁵ The same newspaper wrote: "The particular form of society created by 20th-century communist parties will never be replicated. But there are lessons to be learned from its successes as well as its failures."⁶

Social justice as a party principle is fairly popular among the political public structures of Kazakhstan; it is one of the slogans of the People's Democratic Nur Otan Party and the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. *The very term "justice," which is written as "adolat" in practically all the local languag-*

³ See: *O Estado de São Paulo*, 4 April, 2007.

⁴ G. Yavlinsky, "The Road Map for Reform," *The Moscow Times*, 17 June, 2005.

⁵ M. Kettle, "Socialism is Dead," *The Guardian*, 27 October, 2004.

⁶ S. Milne, "Communism May Be Dead, but Clearly not Dead Enough," *The Guardian*, 17 February, 2006.

es, appeared or appears in the name of the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, the Social-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, and the Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan. This shows that the term is popular among the political elites and ordinary people.

The position of the Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan deserves special mention. Its leader R. Zoiirov admitted that since the 20th century much has changed in the world social-democratic movement. He added that his party identified its three main slogans—Wisdom, Justice, Development—on the basis of the social-democratic ideology. The party's leader, who is well-known for his political weight on the country's domestic scene and his authority with the international organizations stationed in Dushanbe, warned: "If Tajik society does not gain more political and economic wisdom, justice will never win. Its development will be possible only when society becomes wise and just."⁷ These and other statements of Tajik politicians are obviously suggested by the centuries-old central Asian philosophy (al-Farabi, Ibn Sino, Alisher Navoi) which frequently referred to wisdom, justice and humanism.

What are the specifics of *social justice as interpreted in Uzbekistan* and how is it translated into the program and practical activities of the Adolat SDPU?⁸ It is commonly believed in Uzbekistan that a democratic state should proceed, first, from the fullest possible account of popular mentality; second, from the nation's high spirituality and acute sense of social justice; and third, from the nation's striving toward education and enlightenment. To a great extent, the nation owes this to the traditions of enlightenment in the Muslim East, so-called enlightened Islam. In Uzbekistan *mahalla* plays the central role in the system of social democratization and realization of the key social principles, of which social justice is the main one. These factors largely prompted Uzbek society to dismiss the idea of "vouchers" promoted in Russia in the 1990s as another hypostasis of false egalitarianism of socialism,⁹ while the system of centralized distribution was described as "false interpretation of social justice."

The principle of *social state* is closely related to the idea of social justice. Corresponding provisions can be found in the constitutions of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. Today the social state is interpreted as a constitutional legal status that presupposes constitutional guarantees of economic and social rights and freedoms. This means that the state has shouldered the task of maintaining the standard of living and satisfaction of its citizens' material and spiritual demands to the extent it is able. Today, the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, and three Kazakhstan's parties—the National Social-Democratic Party, the ?dilet Democratic Party, and the Real Ak Zhol Democratic Party—are treating the "social state" as one of their priorities. The Tajik social-democrats likewise are not alien to the rhetoric about the relations between the law-governed state and civil society.¹⁰ Meanwhile, a specifically social-democratic approach to what the state is in contemporary society and to social society betrays its weakness when compared to the official interpretations of the "democratic law-governed state" (Uzbekistan); "the professional state that retains only its absolutely necessary functions" (Kazakhstan), etc. It seems that so far the idea of the social state in Central Asia remains an imported ideological product typical of later European constitutions

⁷ R. Zoiirov, "Sotsial-demokraticheskaia partiia—novaia partiia dlia srednikh sloev Tajikistana," 6 February, 2003, available at [www.varorud.org] (see also: R. Zoiirov, "I am not seeking high posts, I want to lead people," 10 June, 2008, available at [www.ozodi.org], in Uzbek).

⁸ It should be said that the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan affirms commitment "to the ideals of democracy and social justice"; Art 14 says "the state shall function on the principles of social justice and legality." The Uzbek rulers were convinced from the very beginning that social justice was a dominant idea and declared that they intended to tie together effective economic development and social guarantees and social justice. They posed as the social guarantor of stability, social security, and social justice.

⁹ See: I.A. Karimov, "Uzbekistan po puti uglubleniia ekonomicheskikh reform. 1995," available at [www.press-service.uz].

¹⁰ See: R. Zoiirov, "Sotsial-demokraticheskaia partiia—novaia partiia dlia srednikh sloev Tajikistana."

and industrial societies, the meaning of which is still vague while the references to it are nothing more than an indication of “etatist” positions.

The calls of local social democracy to put an end to *corruption* are connected with the social justice principle as the social state’s slogan. The anti-corruption struggle is obviously seen as a “legal” component of social justice and a social state. The Social-Democrats of Kazakhstan (NSDPK) are one of the best examples of the above: they call on the state to do away with “systemic corruption” in the tax and customs structures and demand that the administration methods should be improved and the “shadow economy” suppressed. The party describes the “non-transparent and unfair distribution of money earned by the export of oil, gas, copper, and chromium” as a challenge to national security. The NSDPK program says in part: “Subsurface resources belong to the entire nation but they are used to enrich a handful of corrupt top bureaucrats and oligarchs.”¹¹ According to the expert community, the words “discrediting,” “people,” and “raw material resources” are most frequently used in the party’s program documents.¹² Outside experts find it hard to understand the motives of Zh. Tuiakbai, leader of the Social-Democrats of Kazakhstan: indeed, is he guided by his own ideas of social development or a very natural urge for political power? His slogans sound adequate for many post-Soviet countries.

It seems that social justice has not exhausted its ideological potential in social democracy.¹³ The world financial crisis has added urgency to the principle of social justice and its slogans of *equality between men and women*, the rights of the autochthonous peoples and migrants, *employment and social security*. This means that social democracy in Central Asia, and elsewhere, can use them in its everyday activities.

Socialism, “Democratic Socialism,” Or Socialist International? “Against the Privatization of Profits and Socialization of Losses”

Today the Communist Party of Kazakhstan led by S. Abdildin (55,000 members), the Communist People’s Party of Kazakhstan led by V. Kosarev (90,000 members) and the Communist parties of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are still devoted to the *scientific socialism* of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. To a certain extent (and contrary to their intentions) they promoted the social-democratic ideas in their countries. President of Kazakhstan Nazarbaev himself deemed it necessary to point out that “we have left behind the period of indiscriminate criticism of the socialist idea. The time has come to analyze

¹¹ “Za novy Kazakhstan! Predvybornaia programma OSDPK.”

¹² S. Konovalov, “Predvybornye platformy partiy: opyt primeneniia metodiki diskursnogo analiza,” 6 November, 2007, available at [www.kisi.kz.]

¹³ In 2007 the ILO, in which the social-democrats are fairly influential, adopted a Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. In 2007 the World Day of Social Justice (20 February) was officially established. In his address on the occasion of the first Day of Social Justice (20 February, 2009), U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said: “For the United Nations, the pursuit of social justice for all is at the core of our global mission to promote development and human dignity. Tragically, social justice still remains an elusive dream for an appallingly large portion of humanity. Extreme poverty, hunger, discrimination and denial of human rights continue to scar our moral landscape” (*Message of U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on the Occasion of the World Day of Social Justice*, 20 February, 2009, available at [www.un.org]).

what people gained from socialism in its Soviet variant and what should be resolutely rejected.”¹⁴ The leaders of Kazakhstan have never rejected the historical chance of identifying the acceptable and unacceptable variants of socialism as a global idea.

The Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, in turn, when holding forth about socialism, pointed out in its 1994 program that “practically all positive and rational elements of the socialist model were discarded while the developed capitalist countries are using its positive elements creatively and successfully.” The program describes the social-democratic idea as an organic blend of *socialist values shared by mankind* and the “democratic means used to secure these aims with the help of market economic mechanisms.” It described the party’s main principles as “the principles of *democratic socialism* and introduction of political, economic, and social democracy into all social spheres.”¹⁵

The Tajik Social-Democrats have their own ideas of socialism. In Tajikistan the Communist Party in its basically unchanged form could have opposed, much more successfully than others, the social-democratic “revisionism” but it took it much more time to adjust to the new realities than the Communist parties in other countries. SDPT leader R. Zoirov has pointed out that each of the parties “is moving toward social justice in its own way. The Socialists seek popular support in general while we pin our hopes on individuals.” Why? Because, says Zoirov, “social justice should be first established in relation to each individual.” This means that the Tajik Social-Democrats associate their ideas of social justice, social equality, and the social state with *individual freedom*.

Let me remind you that early in the 1990s most of the Central Asian leaders rejected “the orthodox ideas of capitalism and socialism.”¹⁶ In Uzbekistan, where the “cotton affair” and other criminal cases deprived the Communist Party of much of its authority, there is no place for a communist party able to promote “red” social-democratic ideas in independent Uzbekistan. More than that: the “developed socialism” of the Soviet era is still associated in the republic with “the plundering of natural and mineral raw materials in an extensive way that incurred great material and other losses,”¹⁷ “nepotism and clan relations,”¹⁸ “the use of force and pressure, lies and hypocrisy,”¹⁹ and the “Aral tragedy.” Should this be taken to mean that socialism is outright rejected? Obviously not. Disillusionment with “developed socialism” has nothing to do with socialism in general. “Socialism and the socialist principles have many advantages when it comes to social guarantees—no one can deny this,” said President Karimov.²⁰ Political leaders of practically all the Central Asian countries approve of the “idea to bring together the ideas of socialism and an efficient market economy demonstrated by the Chinese model of the socialist market economy.”²¹ This is another point in favor of socialism.

Do the Central Asian Social-Democrats stand a chance of being heard in the Socialist International? Is the government prepared to help them? According to numerous experts Socialist International membership is the only way to carry weight with the European Union in the region. So far the political establishment is not ready to share its foreign policy monopoly and use the instruments of

¹⁴ N.A. Nazarbaev, *Strategiia nezavisimosti*, Atamura, Almaty, 2003, p. 88.

¹⁵ *Program of the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan*, endorsed by the 2nd Congress on 24 September, 1994, available at [www.kenesh.org].

¹⁶ I.A. Karimov, “Vystuplenie na 48-i sessii Generalnoi Assamblei OON,” 28 September, 1993, available at [www.press-service.uz].

¹⁷ I.A. Karimov, “Uzbekistan na poroge XXI veka: ugrozy bezopasnosti, usloviia i garantii progressa,” 1997, available at [www.press-service.us].

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ I.A. Karimov, “Ideologiya—eto ob`edinyayushchiiy flag natsii, obshchestva, gosudarstva. Otvety na voprosy glavnogo redaktora gazety *Tafakkur*, No. 2, 1992,” available at [www.press-service.uz].

²⁰ I.A. Karimov, “My ubezhdeny v pravilnosti izbrannogo puti,” 1995, available at [www.press-service.uz].

²¹ I.A. Karimov, “Uzbekistan—sobstvennaia model perekhoda na rynochnye otnoshenia,” 1995, available at [www.press-service.uz].

civil society to achieve diplomatic aims. What is more the parties and their leaders, who are quite successful at home, are not prepared to sacrifice their ambitions on the international arena for the sake of national interests. Recently, in the context of the world financial crisis, the Socialist International has formulated higher demands on the social-democratic movement. It repeated its definition of capitalism as “an economic model which has been operating for the last three decades with no moral compass”²² for the Central Asian countries still living in the “early capitalist” epoch. They are still moving toward the widely operating market economy.

Experience of the Social-Democratic Parties of Asian Countries with a Predominantly Muslim Population

The experience gained by some of the Asian Social-Democratic member parties of the Socialist International can clarify the prospects for Central Asia. Here I shall refer to the Democratic Action Party of Malaysia, the National Democratic Party of Egypt, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Socialist Union of Popular Forces of Morocco, the Democratic Constitutional Rally of Tunisia, and the Mauritius Labor Party. All of them, with the exception of the Egyptian, Pakistani, and Mauritius parties, have socialism, or rather *democratic socialism*, as their aim.

The six parties share the idea of *social justice* as one of their fundamental principles. The Malaysian Democrats and Mauritius Laborites also speak about economic justice. All of them except the PPP accept human rights and freedoms as a priority; the PPP is the only one among them that has the “interests of the peasants” as its central program issue. The Egyptian National-Democrats concentrate on a “stronger position for the private sector” and “greater involvement of young people and women in public life.” The Moroccan Socialists insist on “*using scientific and technical achievements* as a means of achieving sustainable economic, social, and cultural development.”

The Mauritius Laborites and Egyptian National-Democrats call on the trade unions to play a more important role; the former and the Malaysian Democrats are interested in environmental protection. The PPP alone speaks of its dedication to “Islamic religious values,” the Tunisian Constitutional Democrats are the only party calling for “de-colonization of the Tunisian economy,” “partial collectivization,” etc. Even before the world financial crisis the Moroccan Socialists insisted that “the vulnerability of the country’s national economy” should be overcome. The Central Asian Social Democrats might be interested in the slogans of the Malaysian Democrats calling for *social order* as the key element of free individual development; *employment as a norm*, value, and dignity of man. They oppose *unjust wars and weapon production* and insist on *equal access for all to the national and global cultural heritage*.

The above confirms that Central Asian social democracy is following a common road; it has done much and should accomplish even more. The experience of similar parties working in the Asian countries with a predominantly Muslim population confirms that they should pay even more attention to the traditions and novelties introduced by similar structures.

²² “Socialist International Leaders Address Global Financial Crisis in Meeting at United Nations 26 September, 2008. Statement on the Global Financial Crisis, 26 September, 2008,” available at [www.socialistinternational.org].

Who Votes for the Central Asian Social-Democrats?

The experience of the social-democratic parties enumerated above is very important for dealing with the greatest challenge: the social-democratic electorate. The six member parties of the Socialist International are supported by the *workers and national minorities* (which have probably lost faith in private property and have no access to it).²³ The Moroccan Socialists count on the *democratic-minded intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie* among those who vote for them. All the parties rely on *trade union members*. It is hard to agree with those who say that the youth and women can be described as the electorate in its classical form (the dominant orthodox religious ideology deprives women of independent access to private property).

The Adolat Social-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan describes “the middle social strata the political and social will of whom the party strives to express” as its social basis. The Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan likewise announces that it relies “on the middle strata with huge material and spiritual potential” and that “so far the soil for the middle strata is inadequate and its share in Tajik society is negligible.” Its leader R. Zoiirov admits that the party relies on those who live in the capital and younger (under 35) people.²⁴

The middle strata can be described as a dynamic, promising, and expanding electorate. They are interested in strengthening the independence of their countries because they profited from it more than the other social groups. This is especially true of the middle strata in young states. Property owners who are gradually growing rich are normally defined as the middle class; meanwhile the ranks of this class could swell with people working in the public sector (teachers and medics) if their wages continue growing. This means that this definition is as vague as that of the social state. Experience has taught us that the social-democrats can rely mostly on workers engaged at all types of enterprises, including JVs and small businesses.

Will the social-democratic parties acquire stable electorates and how can this be done? The parliamentary factions should gain more influence as the most important instrument for winning people over to their side. Party groups in the legislative structures of the provinces, regions, and at the grass-roots level should demonstrate greater and much more rational involvement to attract the party electorate. These groups serve the cornerstone of the political parties; they represent them in the region and are largely responsible for the parties’ efficiency and their appeal to potential voters. An efficient system of public control of executive and administrative structures is another important instrument in the policy of parties and their electoral strategy.

The Year 2009: Unexpected Transformation of the Principles of State Regulation and Its Impact on the Social-Democrats

From the very beginning the AuyI Social-Democratic Party of Kazakhstan spoke about “*justified market reforms*” as if anticipating the impact of a global crisis on the local economies. It went as

²³ The Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan speaks of the obvious support of the national minorities (see: *Program of the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan*, endorsed by the 2nd Congress on 24 September, 1994).

²⁴ See: R. Zoiirov, “Sotsial-demokraticheskaia partiia—novaia partiia dlia srednikh sloev Tajikistana.”

far as stating that “the state should be more involved in economic regulation.”²⁵ The Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan described “state regulation of market relations” in its program as the most important principle of its economic policies.²⁶

State regulation as understood in Uzbekistan can be divided into two periods: the present and the previous related to the transit economy of 1991-2000. In 2001 the government liberalized monetary regulation and improved its policies in the sphere of customs and tariff regulation; in 2002 it announced that state regulation would be continued in telecommunication and data transfer networks and in the transit of special cargoes and military contingents across the country; in 2003 the same applied to radio frequencies and the notary office; a system of obligatory certification of imported goods was introduced as well as norms and standards adjusted to the demands of the World Customs Organization. On 1 October, 2002 state regulation of the means earmarked for wages was annulled at all enterprises and organizations irrespective of the form of ownership. On the whole, the president of Uzbekistan pointed out that “state regulation was used where the country’s long-term interests needed them and was dictated by the urgent need to find a way out of the extreme situations. It was completely justified.”²⁷ The Adolat Social-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan described limited state interference in the economic structures, trimming state control, and de-monopolization of production as its program aims.

We can hardly expect the social-democrats to busy themselves with economic issues, including instituting or restoring state regulation, in crisis conditions. Leader of the Tajik Social-Democrats is very skeptical about the chances for this: “It is thought that we should first improve the economic and social situation and then develop democracy. This is wrong. It should be the other way around: we should first establish democracy as the beginning of everything.”²⁸ Tajikistan, which is integrated into the world division of labor to a much lesser extent than its neighbors, will suffer less from the world crisis; however its “meandering” progress disproves the usual opinions.²⁹

In connection with state regulation and state support, the local social-democrats are paying much attention to the *countryside*. The Social-Democrats of Kazakhstan entitled one of the sections of their program “Real Support to the Countryside and the People Who Live There!”³⁰ The fact that 2009 was declared the Year of the Development and Improvement of the Countryside and a corresponding state program was adopted added weight to the activities of the Adolat Social-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan.

The position of the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan, which correlated with the issues of state regulation and state monopoly on *water* described as a “resource on par with oil and gas,” as well as the construction of the Kambaratinskaia Hydropower Station deserve special mention. It cannot be adequately interpreted either by the governments or by the social-democratic parties of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan on the lower reaches of the rivers. One feels that the Kazakh Social-Democrats were quite right when they pointed out: “Relations with the Central Asian and other CIS countries should be dominated by pragmatic national interests and democratic values as their important element.”³¹

²⁵ “Kazakhstanskaia sotsial-demokraticheskaja partia ‘Auy!’” 20 February, 2009, available at [www.akorda.ks].

²⁶ See: *Program of the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan*, endorsed by the 2nd Congress on 24 September, 1994.

²⁷ I.A. Karimov, “Obespechit postupatelnoe i ustoiчивoe razvitie strany—vazhneishaja nasha zadacha,” report at the Gala Meeting devoted to the 16th anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, available at [www.press-service.uz].

²⁸ R. Zoiirov, “Sotsial-demokraticheskaja partiia—novaia partiia dlja srednikh sloev Tajikistana.”

²⁹ See: E. Rakhmon, “Vystuplenie na rasshirennom zasedanii Pravitelstva RT, posviashchennom obsuzhdeniiu itogov sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo razvitiia strany v 2008 godu i opredeleniiu zadach na 2009 god (Dushanbe, 16 January, 2009),” available at [www.president.tj].

³⁰ “Za novy Kazakhstan! Predvybornaia programma OSDPK.”

³¹ Ibidem.

The World Financial Crisis: Will the Central Asian Social-Democrats Become Parties of Power?

It is interesting to note that fifteen years ago one of the Central Asian leaders spoke about possible crises in the emerging market economy.³² In the summer of 2008 Uzbekistan started drawing an integral Anti-Crisis Program for 2009-2012.³³ This confirms that starting in late 2008 the Adolat Social-Democratic Party has been fortifying its ranks; the leaders are looking for new program issues while its leader D. Tashmukhamedova was elected speaker of the parliament's lower chamber and the party joined the Democratic Bloc, the ruling parliamentary faction.

In an effort to tie the anti-crisis efforts to one of the parties, the president of Kazakhstan formulated four, social-democratic by nature, tasks for the ruling Nur Otan People's Democratic Party:³⁴ dealing with the socioeconomic problems and control over spending the anti-crisis money; more attention to social security; working toward consolidation and unity of the Kazakhstan society; and overcoming the crisis and readying for a breakthrough.³⁵ Earlier, the president of Kazakhstan admitted that "a society in which a small group of rich people is far removed from a large group of poor people will never survive and will never flourish."³⁶

The 15-year old program of the Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan looks fairly attractive in the crisis: *continued crediting of small businesses, low interest rate on credits, continued state-supported projects of developing entrepreneurship, free economic zones, greater responsibility for unjustified inspections and auditing of businesses by law-enforcers and fiscal structures.*

The Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan presents itself as a "constructive opposition party" and announces that, like all other parties, "it will fight for power." R. Zoiirov pointed out that its task was "to develop the people's political will translated into election results." He "*rejected the use of the 'ruling party' term as unacceptable from the legal point of view.*" If the "ruling party" continues imposing its ideology as the state one, says R. Zoiirov, this will amount to a "crime."³⁷

The Socialist International leaders, as well as leaders of the Central Asian states and local social-democratic parties, speak about the need to increase support to *small and medium-sized companies* in the form of crediting programs.³⁸ This means that capitalism is not totally rejected but is being transformed into employment largely based on small business. This fully applies to a more precise definition of the social-democratic electorate.

³² See: I.A. Karimov, "Uzbekistan po puti uglubleniia ekonomicheskikh reform."

³³ It concentrated on accelerated modernization, technical and technological retooling of enterprises, wide introduction of flexible technologies; support for exporter enterprises to maintain their competitiveness in the foreign markets; improving competitiveness of enterprises through a rigid economy, lowering production costs and hence the cost of products; cutting down on energy consumption by introducing an efficient energy-saving system; support of Uzbek producers by stimulating domestic demand.

³⁴ On the influence of the social-democratic and socialist ideas on the political establishment of Kazakhstan see: T. Ismagambetov, "Razvitie kazakhskogo isteblishmenta v kontse XIX-seredine XX vekov," *Tsentralnaia Azia*, No. 5 (11), 1997, p. 7.

³⁵ See: N.A. Nazarbaev, "Zakliuchitelnoe vystuplenie na rasshirennoe zasedanii Biuro Politsoвета partii," available at [www.akorda.kz]; "Glava gosudarstva, Predsedatel NDP 'Nur Otan' Nursultan Nazarbaev provel rasshirennoe zasedanie Biuro Politsoвета partii, posviashchennoe 10-letnemu iubileiu sozdaniia partii," available at [www.akorda.kz].

³⁶ N.A. Nazarbaev, *Strategiia nezavisimosti*, p. 14.

³⁷ R. Zoiirov, "Sotsial-demokraticeskaiia partiia—novaia partiia dlia srednikh sloev Tajikistana."

³⁸ See: F.-W. Steinmeir, "Evropeiskiy Pakt budushchego za trud (European Pact for the Future of Employment). Pakt antikrizisnykh mer v ramkakh Evropeiskogo Soiuzna," 21 January, 2009, available at [www.politoraz.ru]; H. Hail, "4 stolpa, na kotorykh osnovyvaetsia sotsial-demokraticeskaiia ekonomicheskaiia politika," 25 January, 2009, available at [www.politoraz.ru].

On 9 January, 2009, when speaking at the “New World. New Capitalism” Conference in Paris, Laborite Tony Blair described the world crisis as “unprecedented,” “the most tricky intellectual challenge,” and “an era of very low predictability.” He also added: “The traditional welfare systems are not properly equipped to deal with the scale and nature of the tsunami affecting us.” “I would invest,” continued the former leader of the UK ruling party (a member of Socialist International), “in renewable energy, science, technology, education, and innovation.”³⁹

The Main Traditional Postulates of Contemporary Social Democracy as Untapped Regional Possibilities at a Time of Crisis

It seems that the Central Asian public has not yet grasped the meaning of ideological *pluralism*, one of the core postulates of contemporary social democracy. What academics and experts call the low culture of discussion or, more broadly, of political culture will remain a striking feature of the Central Asian political parties (social-democratic parties being no exception) for a long time to come. The “peaceful coexistence” of ideas is possible within the context of the peaceful coexistence of all property types, in the presence of well-rooted private property in a prospering country. Only a clash of opinions, ideas, and convictions pushes the social-democrats forward.

The principle of *honest trade* (which rules out the dominance of speculative markets) is another, still untapped, possibility.⁴⁰ Social democracy stands a better chance of gaining popularity during the primary accumulation of capital when national property is unevenly distributed and attempts to fix the results are the most brazen. On the other hand, today the social-democrats are lobbying the idea of guaranteed free world trade and alleviation of protectionism.⁴¹

It is equally important to clearly grasp the meaning of *social partnership* as interpreted by the Central Asian social-democrats. In its traditional sense this is a triangle created by the state, the businessman, and the worker, not “cooperation of civil society with the state machine.” When seen through the prism of centuries-old British democracy (the way in which branches of foreign organizations working in Central Asia regard local realities) the distorted nature of the Central Asian interpretation of the term becomes even more obvious.

Cooperation with *trade unions* is another potential resource of local social democracy. So far the fairly amorphous nature of trade unions makes wide-scale cooperation impossible. Trade unions did not find a place for themselves in the transition economy and have not yet identified their niche in the market economy. In any case, they remain a powerful reserve of the Central Asian social-democratic parties.

Finally, the social-democratic postulates of *removing restrictions on immigration and of peaceful coexistence of cultures and civilizations* are fairly important. The leaders of the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan regard them as important.⁴² The Social-Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan sees its aim as transforming the country from an exporter into an importer of labor resources.

³⁹ [<http://tonyblairoffice.org/2009/01/speech-by-tony-blair-at-the-ne.html>].

⁴⁰ See: “Socialist International Leaders Address Global Financial Crisis in Meeting at United Nations 26 September, 2008. Statement on the Global Financial Crisis, 26 September, 2008.”

⁴¹ See: F.-W. Steinmeir, *op. cit.*

⁴² See: R. Zoirov, “Sotsial-demokraticheskaia partiia—novaia partiia dlia srednikh sloev Tajikistana;” *idem*, “Ia—optimist, kak i vse chleny SDPT;” 31 December, 2007, available at [www.press-uz.info].

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The latest documents of the Socialist International speak very eloquently of the “collapse of neo-liberal policies, which presents two specific challenges that need to be overcome. Firstly, the responses to the crisis should not repeat the same ill-founded concepts of the past, and secondly, their collapse will not necessarily lead to a strengthening of progressive policy, but could see the emergence of an extremist far right policy caused by fear and marginalization.”⁴³ These two challenges are in fact two central threats for the Central Asian Social-Democracy.

⁴³ “Socialist International Leaders Address Global Financial Crisis in Meeting at United Nations 26 September, 2008. Statement on the Global Financial Crisis, 26 September, 2008.”