

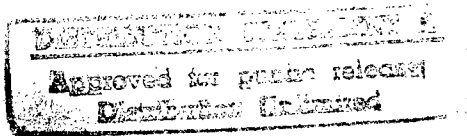
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THE GENERAL AND THE PARTICULAR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
SOCIETY

By M. Gil'man

- USSR -



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FOREWORD

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THE GENERAL AND THE PARTICULAR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
SOCIETY

Following is the translation of an article by
M. Gil'man in Partivnaya Zhizh' Kazakhstana
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The problem pertaining to the general and the particular in historical development is one of the focal points of the science of Marxism-Leninism. A correct scientific understanding of the relationship between the general and the particular is of primary importance in gaining cognition and in social practices. Materialistic teaching of the general and the particular in historical development as applied in an analysis of the present epoch performs an important role in the struggle against revisionism and rightist opportunism on the one hand, and dogmatism and leftist sectarianism on the other.

A superficial look at the history of man reveals a boundless variety of phenomena and events, which exist and take place either simultaneously or consecutively. It is not difficult to reveal that different peoples, in different countries have their own peculiarities in their economy as well as in the social and political organization, in culture and in all the other aspects of public life.

There is much that is unique in every phenomena (an event took place at a certain time, the movement was headed by some public figure and so on). Those who limit themselves with a description of such physical variety are incapable of understanding that society, like nature, develops according to objective laws, and that the development of a society is a natural historical process.

Marxism, having developed a truly scientific, materialistic interpretation of society, revealed the general basis of the historical process--material production. Historical materialism indicated that with all the variety of social phenomena, they all have something in common, something recurring, certain general features. The general in historic development is an expression of material unity, of objective regularities. The history of society is a unified regulated process, since all historical epochs are characterized by certain common features and regularities (the law governing the correspondence of production relationships to the type of productive forces, for instance).

The degree of similarity among the various social features, aspects and regularities is different. If the law governing the correspondence of the production relationships to the type of productive forces is one of the universal laws, which are in effect throughout history, then the law of surplus value, for example, being common to all the capitalist countries, is at the same time a specific law of capitalism, peculiar to it alone. Proletarian dictatorship is a feature which distinguishes the socialist states from the preceding type of government; at the same time the realization of proletarian dictatorship is the most important general feature of all socialist countries.

In the material world the general and the particular exist in isolation from one another: they form an organic unity. The general regularities are manifested in peculiar concrete conditions. The law governing the correspondence of production relationships to the type of productive forces is a general sociological law, but its effect under socialism differs from that under capitalism. Proletarian dictatorship is necessary in all countries which are carrying out a conversion to socialism, but the governmental forms of proletarian dictatorship are different (Soviets, people's democracies).

In elaborating the teachings of dialectic materialism concerning the relationship of the general to the particular, V.I. Lenin stressed that "the isolated does not exist other than in a relationship which leads to the general. The general exists only in the isolated, through the isolated. Everything isolated is (in one way or another) general. Everything general is (a small part of an entire aspect of the essence) of the isolated. Everything general encompasses all the isolated objects only approximately. Everything isolated enters the general incompletely, etc., etc." / Sochineniya (Works); Vol. 38, page 359. /

The situation regarding the organic, dialectic unity of the general, in particular, as well of the singular is a great methodological and practical significance. In order to know the essence of a certain group of phenomena it is necessary to reveal their deep internal commonness. Such commonness is achieved as a result of an analysis of the concrete multiformity and must embody, as pointed out by Lenin, all the wealth of the particular and the individual.

In sociology a lack of understanding of the unity of the general and the particular, an absolutization of the general, isolated from the unified and the general, leads to anti-scientific, theoretically helpless reasoning about "the society in general." On the other hand, a similarly unfounded absolutization of the particular, an aspiration to be limited by an establishment of the isolated. In revealing the class essence of that tendency, which is characteristic for reactionary ideologists, V.I. Lenin proved that it means "a negation of science, an aspiration to pollute all

generalizations, to hide from 'laws' of historical development, to hide the forest behind some trees," that "a banishment of laws from science is in fact merely an introduction of the laws of religion." / Sochineniya, Vol. 20, pages 179, 182. /

A primary significance of scientific comprehension of dialectics of the general and the particular is revealed in a Leninist analysis of Marx's basic idea--an idea about the natural historical process of the development of the social-economic formations. Rejecting abstract-diagrammatic reasoning about "society in general," Marx evolved a concept of social-economic formation by isolating production relationships, from the great variety of social relationships as the principal, basic ones, that determine the other relationships. Having revealed the common nature of the production relationships and of the superstructure, Marx generalized the orders existing in various countries into a concept of social economic formation; he profoundly analysed specifically the regularities of capitalist formation.

The common nature of the basic regularities and features in all of the capitalist countries also signifies the commonness of the basic contradictions, as well as their trends and further aggravations. It therefore follows that the method for resolving these contradictions is also basically the same for all countries: the basic regularities involved in a conversion from capitalism to socialism are the same for all countries.

This most important Marxist contention is rejected by the revisionists. Failing to understand, or not wishing to understand the dialectics of the general and the particular in the process of conversion to socialism, the revisionists absolutize the national peculiarities, depriving Marxism of its revolutionary essence. They even propound the theory that it is possible to convert to socialism without a socialist revolution, and that it tantamount to a refusal to struggle against capitalism and a capitulation to it. An example of reactionary speculation in the national peculiarities is an ill-famed motto of "national communism." The revisionists, seeing only the isolated peculiarities, and the specifics in a movement, ignore the general features. The dogmatists, however, absolutize the general, ignoring the concrete peculiarities. In confirming the faithfulness of the communist and workers' parties to the Declaration and Manifesto of Peace, adopted in 1957, the Moscow Conference of Representative of the Communist and Workers' Parties which took place in November of 1960, stressed, in part, that the interests of a further development of the communist and workers' movement require the continuation of a determined struggle on two fronts--a struggle against revisionism, which remains the principal danger, and against dogmatism and sectarianism.

The teachings of dialectic materialism about the general and the particular is of exceptional significance in the solution of any program in Marxist social science. A remarkable example of the

application of such teaching in the revelation of prospectives for the progress of the backward peoples is the Leninist theory of the possibility of a conversion of such peoples to socialism, with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced nations, by bypassing the capitalist stage altogether. This Leninist theory was embodied in the development of formerly backward okrainas of Russia, including Kazakhstan.

The building of socialism in the former okrainas of the pre-revolutionary Russia represented an extremely complex interlacing of the general and the particular. A skillful consideration of the concrete conditions is one of the great merits of the bolshevik party. A conversion to socialism by the formerly backward peoples was part of a unified process taking place throughout the country, but the realization of the common task there was complicated by specifically peculiar conditions. In Kazakhstan such peculiarities were the small size of the industrial proletariat, the existence of patriarchal-feudal relationships in the aul and a nomadic type of life. Taking these peculiarities into consideration the Soviet government conducted a series of important social-economic transformations between 1921 and 1928, which dealt a crushing blow to the vestiges of patriarchal-feudal relationships in the aul (confiscation of the property of large semi-feudal land owners, land-water reforms, along with a number of other measures). Thereby, by skillfully taking into consideration the specifics of the development of a national republic in resolving the tasks pertaining to the entire Union, the Communist Party transformed Kazakhstan into a thriving socialist kray.

Marxist-Leninist teachings about the unity of the general and the particular is of primary importance in the solution of problems concerning the relationship of nations to national cultures.

The principal role belongs to the general, basic regularities of development. It follows from this that a proper consideration of the national peculiarities means an advent of the most favorable conditions for the resolution of common tasks. At the same time instances of national limitation, localized tendencies, an exaggeration of national peculiarities and a belittling of the role of the general regularities, which form a basis for the further consolidation of the unity among our socialist nations are still encountered. Individual articles devote too much attention to a demonstration of the national peculiarities, to underlining their significance and only a fleeting mention of the general, which amalgamates the cultures of the various peoples of the Soviet Union into a unified socialist culture. At the same time the nationalist specifics, national traditions are not infrequently too emphatically identified with various forms of pre-revolutionary national life. This reflects nationalist residues, against which an emphatic struggle must be waged.

Marxism teaches that in the world wide communist society of the future there will be a merger of nations, national cultures and languages and there will be a common culture and a single language. Such a merger will be achieved by man after a lengthy period of multilateral development of the nations, and national cultures on the one hand and increasing closeness among them, on the other.

This includes aspects of a single process, the beginning of which we see in the blossoming of the socialist countries, in those inter-relationships among them which are constantly becoming stronger and more varied. This is expressed in a mutual enrichment of the national cultures, in the occurrence and the development of new, general features, traditions and customs, common to all the peoples of our country. An utter devotion to the socialist Homeland, labor heroism, collectivism, friendship among the peoples, mutual aid and socialist humanism--these are some of them.

These traditions common to all the Soviet peoples must form the center of our attention, which by no means signifies a belittling of the role performed by national specifics. The task partially consists of a skillful consideration and utilization of progressive national traditions in developing features common to all socialist countries and in the development of proletarian internationalism.

In the resolution "Pertaining to the Tasks of Party Propaganda Under Present Conditions" the Central Committee of the Party pointed out that it is necessary to take strict consideration of the national peculiarities in propaganda work, "placing the main emphasis on an international education of the workers, on the further consolidation of the friendship among the peoples, on an undeviating course designed to bring the socialist nations closer together and on their mutual enrichment. It is necessary to conduct an irreconcilable struggle against any manifestations of bourgeois nationalism, tendencies towards an idealization and concealment of the social contradictions of the past, towards a distortion of the true history of any nation and of its relationships with the other peoples of the USSR, against isolated manifestations of national isolation and reticence."

A mastery of materialist teachings and of the relationship between the general and the particular is a necessary premise for a truly creative application and development of the Marxist-Leninist theory on a basis of a generalization of the new historic experience.

The revisionists write and speak extensively about the development of Marxism, as if their writings embody the development of Marxist theory. The Yugoslav revisionists, especially their well recognized theoretician E. Kardel', have ascribed considerable merit to themselves. With respect to that it is appropriate to quote this saying: "All that glitters is not gold." Their development of Marxism is a "development" in quotation marks; the revisionists distort and falsify Marxism.

A true enrichment and creative development of Marxist theory does not and cannot negate its basic principles. In that respect a statement by V.I. Lenin is of vital importance. He wrote: "We certainly do not regard Marxist theory as something complete and inviolable; on the contrary, we feel convinced that it has laid only the cornerstones of a science, which the specialists must develop further in all directions, if they do not want to remain behind the course of time. We think that for the Russian socialists, an independent development of the Marxian theory is of particular importance, since that theory yields only general guiding situations, which are applicable to England in a different manner than to France, to France in a different manner than to Germany and their applicability to Germany different than to Russia." / Sochineniya, Vol. 4, pages 191-192. / This general nature of the "guiding situations" is not recognized by the revisionists. As far as the dogmatists are concerned they, in turn, fail to understand the necessity of taking into consideration the specific peculiarity of the movement.

Let us, for instance, examine the problem of war and peace during the current epoch.

The conclusions made by the 20th and the 21st Congresses CPSU about the fact that under the present conditions there is not fatal inevitability of war, are of paramount political importance. With the further development and consolidation of the world socialist system it will become possible to exclude war completely from the life of the society even before the complete victory of socialism on earth, with partial preservation of socialism.

Do these contentions serve as evidence of a change in the nature of imperialism, as intended by the revisionists? Of course not. The economic basis for war takes root in monopolistic capitalism--and that is the general feature of imperialism which will not disappear as long as the capitalist order remains in existence. Seeing only that aspect, the dogmatists continue to reiterate that war is inevitable, allegedly as long as capitalism remains in existence.

In reality, however, it is impossible to be limited by a single contention about the existence of the economic basis for war. It is necessary to take into consideration those forces which oppose war. This is where the extremely important peculiarities of the present epoch are revealed. Wars were inevitable as long as capitalism was the universal world system. Now the circumstances have changed. The influence of the socialist camp which encompasses over one third of the world's population on the course of world history is constantly increasing. The population of the neutral countries is of similar size. The imperialist countries control over one third of the population of the world, and even in those countries the movement of the fighters for peace is constantly expanding. Therefore a real possibility for controlling the aggressors has come about.

The changing conditions found their reflection in those radically new contentions regarding war and peace which were formulated in the decisions made by the 20th and 21st Congresses CPSU and in the Announcement made by the Conference of Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties and by the Appeal to all the peoples of the world.

The teachings of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and dialectics of the general and particular in the development are the theoretical foundation for the resolution of such an urgent present day problem as the problem pertaining to the forms of the conversion of various countries to socialism. The problem of the general and the specific in the process of conversion to socialism has acquired a special context, and became especially important under the conditions of the victory of the Great October Revolution. That problem became the starting point for the revelation of the international significance of the October, for the prospectives of a world wide revolutionary movement, and for the exposure of international opportunism which rejects the world wide significance of the socialist revolution, of the Soviet experience.

Pointing out that the October Revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat in our country have their own peculiarities, that certain peculiarities will be inherent in a conversion to socialism of any other country, V.I. Lenin stressed the inadmissibility of a simple mechanical application of the experience acquired by one country to another country. V.I. Lenin taught that "these peculiarities, however, may pertain only to what is not of the most importance." / Sochineniya, Vol. 30, page 88. /

The basic features and regularities inherent in our revolution are common to all countries, and therefore "the Russian example shows all the countries something very specific from their own impending future." / Sochineniya, Vol. 31, pages 5-6. /

Leninist teachings about the commonness of the principal regularities in the conversion to socialism found a brilliant substantiation in the practice of revolutionary transformations in all countries of the socialist camp. N.S. Khrushchev stated that "the main road to socialism has already been built, the basic forms and methods for building socialism were verified by life and by the experience gained by many socialist countries."

The well differentiated, generalized characteristic of the principal regularities inherent in the conversion to socialism is cited in the Declaration of the Conference of Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties of the Socialist Countries which took place in November of 1957 in Moscow. The transfer from capitalism to socialism in any country presupposes a sequential conduct of the class struggle, the realization of a proletarian revolution guided by the working class. The principal question pertaining to the socialist revolution is the destruction of the old state machinery and the attainment of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Proletarian dictatorship includes the moment when

the resistance offered by the overthrown exploiting classes is overcome. But the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be defined only as a means for suppressing the overthrown exploiting classes. The principal feature of a dictatorship of the proletariat is an achievement of a durable alliance between the proletariat and the non-proletarian working masses, first of all with the peasantry, under the direction of the working class. Such an alliance, which is of decisive significance in the building of socialism, was defined by V.I. Lenin as the highest principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A basic general regularity in the conversion to socialism is the liquidation of capitalist property and the introduction of socialist production relationships based on communal property. The building of socialism includes the gradual socialist transformation of agriculture.

An even development of the national economy designed to raise the living standards of the workers is a characteristic of all countries undergoing a conversion to socialism. Not a single country is capable of conversion to socialism without conducting a socialist revolution in the field of ideology and culture, without the creation of a new intelligentsia utterly devoted to the socialist order. For a country of proletarian dictatorship it is a historical necessity to liquidate national oppression and the establishment of true equality, fraternal friendship and mutual aid among the peoples. One of the greatest achievements made by the world socialist system is noted in the Announcement made by the Conference of Representatives of the Communist and Workers' Parties and is the confirmation of a Marxist-Leninist contention that along with the disappearance of class antagonisms, the antagonism between nations also vanishes.

The conduct of a proletarian revolution and a successful fulfillment of the tasks inherent in a dictatorship of the proletariat demand guidance from Marxist-Leninist party, which relies on a truly scientific outlook and religiously maintains the purity of its own ranks.

The commonness of the general features and of the basic regularities attendant to a conversion to socialism forms the objective basis for proletarian internationalism, for an international amalgamation of the proletariat, for close knit communist and workers' parties. The Announcement stresses that "the close knit nature, the unity of the communist and the workers' parties, of the peoples of the socialist countries, their faithfulness to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism is the principal source for the strength and invincibility of each socialist country and of the socialist camp as a whole." The rejection of that common feature, the forced promulgation of nationalist peculiarities, the invention of "new" artificial paths towards socialism, which factually amount to a surrender to capitalism--this is what characterizes present day

revisionism. This found its most vivid and concentrated reflection in the program put forth by the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia. The revisionists' speculation on the subject of internationalism, against the international proletarian solidarity, serves the reactionary cause.

The struggle against revisionism by no means signifies a rejection of national peculiarities and of that serious significance which is attributed to their proper recognition in the development of the proper proletarian tactics.

Dialectic unity of the general and the particular is part of reality itself. Therefore without a proper understanding of such a unity, scientific, active, revolutionary tactics by the working class are impossible. V.I. Lenin categorically stressed the inadmissibility of a set pattern, of a mechanical levelling, of an identification of the tactical rules of the struggle. "All nations will arrive at socialism, that is inevitable," wrote V.I. Lenin, "but all of them will not arrive in exactly the same manner, each nation will add its own variety of democracy, to the various forms of proletarian dictatorship, to the various degrees of socialist transformation of the different aspects of social life." /Sochineniya, Vol. 23, page 58. /

This peculiar feature of the revolution is conditioned by many different concrete reasons. The private difference in the character of the economy, in the level of economic development, certain peculiarities of the class structure, the preservation of pre-capitalist relationships in varying degrees, a dissimilarity in political forms which are basically of the same type, a difference in the level of cultural development, the different times at which the revolutions ripen as a result of the effect of the law of inequality of the economic and political development, the various features of national specifics, peculiarities of the international situation--these are some of the circumstances which exert a certain influence on the realization of socialist transformations in the different countries.

As a result of the thorough analysis of the peculiarities of the present epoch the 20th Congress CPSU enriched Marxism with some very important contentions concerning the fact that the socialist revolution is constantly acquiring a variety of forms. In a number of countries a peaceful, partly a parliamentary path towards the attainment of a dictatorship of the proletariat and a conversion to socialism may prove to be quite possible.

V.I. Lenin wrote that the task confronting the Marxist parties is "to be able to apply the general and basic principles of communism to that peculiar variety of relationships among the classes and parties, and to that peculiar variety of the objective development towards communism, which is found in the various countries, which they must know how to find, to study and to anticipate." /Sochineniya, Vol. 31, pages 69-70. /

The generalization of the concrete peculiarity from a standpoint of basic undistorted principles of Marxism--that is what is a creative approach to the Marxist-Leninist theory. V.I. Lenin pointed out that "a Marxist must always take into consideration actual life, and the exact facts of reality." The founder of our party taught that the very essence, the soul of communism is "a concrete analysis of a concrete situation." / Sochineniya, Vol. 24, page 26; Vol. 31, page 143. / The Leninist demand of "a concrete analysis of a concrete situation" stipulated not only a revelation of the specific elements of a certain movement, but also an understanding of the general elements which are manifested in it in a manner peculiar to it. The Announcement made by the Conference of the Representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties, in revealing the reasons and circumstances which made possible the great achievements of the socialist countries, stresses the correct application of "general regularities inherent in the building of socialism with a consideration for the historic peculiarities of each country and for the interests of the socialist system as a whole...."

The communist and workers' parties, in working out their strategy and tactics for the revolutionary struggle in accordance with the peculiarities of the different countries, by creatively applying the basic principles of Marxism in resolving the tasks attendant to the insuperable movement of today--a movement towards communism, always rely on the teachings of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy.