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## **Marxism And The Individual**

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THE STUDY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT JUST ONE of the aspects of Marxism- Leninism, but something much more than this. Marxist theory relating to the revolutionary reconstruction of society, and based on the objective laws of history, is nothing other than a scientifically based programme for the workingman's freedom and the all-round development of the individual. Precisely for this reason, Marxist- Leninist studies on the individual are constantly under attack by bourgeois ideologists.

Again and again the critics of communism take the stance that Marxists, on the whole, have not paid enough attention to the problem of the individual, his freedom and creative activity. But there is little need for apology on this score since from the outset, a deep scientific conception of the individual was worked out by the founders of Marxism.

Karl Marx considers the individual, his nature, freedom and development as inseparably connected with society. The starting point of his analysis is not the individual, but society. According to Marxism the fundamental and motivating reasons for the actions of the masses of nations, and the classes within them, are their economic interests. These two moments --- economic interests and belonging to a class, a social group --- finally determine the characteristic and behaviour of the masses and form the various social types of the individual. Based on the relations so formed, arise the different ideological motivations of people's behaviour. From this follows Marx's significant conclusions on man's nature, a conclusion, which is of cardinal importance for historical materialism on the whole, as well as for the theory of the individual.

*"Man 's nature is not abstract; a characteristic of a certain individual. Actually it is the totality of all the social relations".*

And also *"...the real spiritual richness of the individual entirely depends on the richness of his real relations."*

With this understanding of man's nature, is connected the idea of the revolutionary reconstruction of the world and the role of the educational factor.

*"If man's character was formed by circumstances than it would be necessary to make the circumstances human."*

In the process of reconstructing circumstances, i.e., the practical, revolutionary reorganisation of reality, a new individual is formed and more favourable condition for his existence and development created.

Reorganisation of reality is in practices carried out by the masses, who having risen to the active and conscious creative work of history, form a definite type of individual. Thus Marxism-Leninism assesses the individual's fate, his freedom and development, in close connection with the fate of the masses, classes, their economic, and social – political, and spiritual development. Precisely for this reason Marx was able to substitute the cult of abstract man, which prevailed in all the previous philosophies, with the sciences of real people and their historical development.

From Marx's theory of the individual we take three moments which give visual and convincing proof of the scientific, revolutionary and deeply human nature of Marx's study --- the problems of alienation, of freedom, and of the complete development of the individual.

## II

It is incorrect to equate alienation with the process of conversion of labour into products. As long as there is production, there will be objectivisation of man's abilities by himself, but labour's alienation is an historical transient phenomenon: It appears together with the surplus product which is appropriated by the exploiting classes; the slave owners, the feudal lords and the capitalists, i.e., with the

emergence of private property. Under conditions of property, the wealth formed and accumulated through the worker's labour, becomes the tool of his exploitation, the material force which brings upon him all means of economic compulsion, political coercion, spiritual oppression and deception. Naturally *"the worker approaches the product of his labour as someone else's ....as he approaches the world as the enemy standing against him."*

But not only is the product of labour alienated. Production itself is an active alienation of man.

*"Labour for the worker is something external not belonging to his nature...in his labour he does not affirm himself, but denies himself, feels not happy, but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and spiritual energy but wears out his physical nature and destroys his spiritual force. This is why the worker feels that he is himself only outside of working hours in the process of labour he feels he is estranged from himself. He is himself when he is not working, and when he works he is already not himself."*

So the workers labour appears as his loss of himself. A worker approaches his own work as something not belonging to him.

Alienation of the product and labour itself predetermines alienation of man from man. As man is alienated from the product of his labour, from his life's activity, from his inherent social nature and therefore resists himself, so is this manifested in the mutual alienation of people. In the conditions of bourgeois society the worker's labour and his product present themselves not as belonging to him but to the capitalist. This is why the relationship established between them is one of domination and submission with hostility and class struggle as the natural state of such relationship.

According to Marx these are the main characteristics, which sum up the proletariat's position under capitalism --- alienation of the product of labour, labour itself, and man.

Of course since Marx's time a lot has changed, but the essence of exploitation has not changed, the fact of alienation in bourgeois society remains. Moreover, according to the calculation of

specialists, the portion of time for which an American labourer, for example works for the capitalist has increased from 40 to 66 per cent. In our time the object of exploitation is not only the worker's physical ability, but also his mental ability. The most dangerous means of social alienation are the formation and accumulation of thermonuclear arms intended for the mass destruction of people, in the name of defending the capitalist's necessary interests.

Marx related the overcoming of alienation to the liquidation of private ownership of the means of production, replacing it with social property, by means of revolution.

Everything that has been achieved to date as a result of building a socialist society, convincingly confirms Marx's theoretical foresight. However it is important to underline that the transformation of the means of production from private to social property does not automatically lead to a revolution in all production, social and political relations in people's consciousness, leading to the immediate establishment of an all-round collective psychology. This takes place only gradually, in the complex and contradictory process of society's reconstruction, in struggle and search. At the same time, as the example of the USSR and other socialist countries has shown, the strength of socialist property and the power of the people, are the firm basis for successful economic growth, and the development of a socialist type of life, culture and a high consciousness of the people.

It is no longer possible to refute the fact that due to the assertion of social property, society has changed into an association of free workers in which all the social wealth --- material and spiritual --- is used in the interests of all workers for the development of their abilities. Of course changing social needs, the conditions at the different stage of society's development, bring about different changes in the distribution of national income in the interests of the economy's progress between the strengthening of defence, the growth of culture, the satisfaction of social necessities and personal needs. But this distribution is always predetermined objectively by the people's interests, the strengthening of their security, the defence of peace. Naturally this distribution can be carried out for the better or worse; there may be serious mistakes and miscalculations. However it is important to underline that in the prevailing conditions, and the given distributional relations, there is no contradiction of interests of antagonistic classes, as when the

exploiting classes appropriate the labour of the exploited. Problems and complications move to the plane of searching for the best methods of stimulation and distribution of production, better calculation of the quantity and quality of the labour performed, the variety of interests of the groups and the different members of the society.

It is today impossible not to acknowledge that in socialist conditions, for the workingman, labour is not only a means of life and a source of personal welfare, but also work for the good of society and service to the people. From a source of alienation of man, labour changes into a factor of confirmation of the worker's dignity, becomes a criterion of his social position and his prestige. Socialist workers drawn into the management of social work, which provides for their participation in state politics, are educated in the spirit of high civic responsibility. This removes man from the narrow circle of personal anxiety, to a wide world of social worries, gives rise to new forces and talents in him. Participation in common work are the strong wings which lift man.

In this way alienation as a social phenomenon, connected with the appropriation of the product of the hired worker's labour by the capitalist, is eliminated under socialism. Of course, for the present, the consequences of an alienation which has been dominant for centuries, persist in the form of people not always regarding social property as their own collective property, but trying to illegally to use it with the aim of personal enrichment. This evil, which remains, is due to causes not yet eliminated, such as insufficient education, contact, etc.

However critics of Marxism or of the real socialism are found who affirm that as long as, under socialism a government exists which distributes the national income, inclusive of distribution of social necessities, appropriation of part of the worker's product occurs and this, they say, is alienation. That is, the fact of a part of the common product being used for the satisfaction of common necessities (management, education, defence, etc.), is taken as alienation. The aim of similar affirmations is to blur the main differences between capitalism and socialism.

To arrive at the correct position it is necessary to remember that alienation is an historical phenomenon connected with the private

ownership of the means of production. It is also necessary to see the new, which appears under socialism. The main difference lies in the fact that here the expenditure for common necessities takes place in the interests of the people and not in the interests of the monopolies, especially the military industrial complex. In capitalist society there are no exploiters who can exclusively appropriate the fruits of everyone's labour. Under socialism the principle from each according to his ability, to each according to his work, dominates. Different violations of this principle (misappropriate, parasitism, misuse, etc.), which are committed for various reasons, are social evils punishable by law. Common needs will always be there and if expenditure for their satisfaction is acknowledged as alienation, then we return to the old theme-the ever – lasting nature of alienation.

At other times it is said that under socialism the worker does not always know what happens to the product of his labour. But the fact of alienation does not lie in this knowledge or ignorance. Under capitalism the worker may in fact know what happens to his product, and often knows that the product goes for the enrichment of the capitalist and continuation of the exploitation of his labour.

We have said above that Marx interrelated the fate of the individual with the fate of the freedom of the masses. This in fact is why it is important to enumerate those changes, which have taken place in the individual's character under socialism. The individual as an individual carrier of social virtues is always the unity of the individual's specific and common virtues. Naturally every individual cannot be characterised without disclosing his individual characteristic. But there is no individual without virtues. Therefore he cannot be understood without also understanding his common typical virtues. In other words, it is a question of two different ideas – the notion of the separate individual, and the notion of the social type of individual. Only the study of common for joining the common and the individual brings us to the sphere of objective laws, and the uncovering of laws is the essence and aim of scientific knowledge.

If we want, with scientific accuracy to discern what happens to the individual under socialism it is necessary first of all to characterise the common changes in the people's consciousness, their virtues, and only on this basis judge the possibilities arising for individual development. Individual virtues are first and foremost realised in the limits of personal freedom, in the all-round development of the individual's abilities and needs, and mainly in his creative work.

Marx, while giving the prognosis of man's development in the condition of the new society, in fact mostly paid attention to the problems of freedom and the all round development of the human force, looking at the latter as the end in itself of the communist society.

Summing up all the changes in the objective position of the workers which take place under socialism, we can say that for the first time in history, the social characteristics common to all members of society assume paramount importance and not the state, national, religious or some other group features. This is manifested in the development of the feeling of collective and an international psychology, the striving to participate in the strengthening of the country with one's labour and in the management of social work on a large scale among the people. In the typological structure of society besides the specific and group features of people, and side by side with them, appear the common features of the common social type of individual, the new man. The socialist individual is the ideal individual, who grasps the aims and principles of communist ideology, which puts common interests above the individual interest.

In the process of socialist transformation, the difficulties in educating and re-educating people in collectivism is clearly seen. The individual, private – ownership psychology is more alive in the consciousness of some people than was thought to be the case earlier. To overcome this, more time and stronger measures are necessary. The society could not allocate more resources for the development of education and the growth of material welfare and culture, then the international and internal circumstances permitted. Some errors in family and school education, in the application of social sanctions and encouragement, played a role in this. It is also necessary to take into account the fact of the capitalist world, which with out the help of different means, strives to support anti-social elements.

Anti-communists, with malicious joy, use the difficulties, which we face to prove that the presence of some problems refutes the fact of educating the new individual under socialism. For this they focus on the defects, while ignoring the very significant fact of the successful education of the overwhelming majority of the population in the spirit of socialism.

III

Marxism-Leninism states that the freedom of the individual worker is directly dependent on the liquidation of capitalist exploitation and private ownership of the means of production. Answering the critics' reproach that communists want to destroy all property as the basis of personal freedom, Marx and Engels show that these accusations are in fact used to hide attempts to present a certain 'freedom' --- the freedom to exploit hired labour, freedom to develop the minority by suppressing the majority --- as the individual's freedom in general. In their first programmatic document, the communists declare it is necessary to destroy the oppression of man by man. In place of the old society with classes and class antagonisms, will be a society, which is an association of workers, where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Two points need to be underlined in connection with what is stated above. The first one concerns Marx and Engels' formulations. Sometimes it is misconstrued in this sense that society cannot be free until every person is granted freedom without restriction. However, to reason thus means to learn towards anarchy. Every society has its prohibitions, its restrictions; in other words, defines its limits of freedom. Any attempt to hasten the realisation of the idea of freedom, in reality advocates tyranny and thus questions the very idea itself. From the content of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* it is seen that Marx and Engels are not talking of any freedom but freedom from exploitation, freedom from class oppression, from class conflicts. In this sense society cannot be considered free till it replace capitalist exploitation with the free collaboration of all members of society.

Secondly, if the welfare and freedom of the capitalist individual is based on his property, and if for him freedom is equivalent to the freedom of possession of this property, freedom for exploitation of hired labour, then the welfare and freedom of the proletarian individual is freedom from exploitation collective possession of means of production, free creative self-assertion, development of his strength and ability. Naturally, for the proletariat the bourgeois formulation is not acceptable for it means for him no freedom. In the same way the bourgeois does not accept the formulation of the *Manifesto* because it means liquidation of the monopoly of bourgeois property and rights, and the freedom and the possibilities with it.



Even such theorising on the striving of each person to conserve his elementary rights and freedoms even in the conditions of bourgeois society, frightens the imperialist bourgeois who fear losing their riches and privileges. Thus they to defend their interests deny the conditions of freedom for everyone else. In this lies the reason for the special attention of the bourgeoisie to the problem of the freedom of the individual, the reason for the partial criticism of Marxist theory and practices, the reason for the acute ideological-theoretical conflict between communist and bourgeois ideologies.

But freedom as deliverance of the worker from capitalist exploitation, is only one, though the most important aspect of his freedom. It cannot be restricted by negative characteristics- freedom from something. Freedom makes sense only when man is free not due to negative forces, to deliver him from something or the other, but due to positive forces, to show his real individuality.

The results of socialist transformation are affirmed by the common radical interests of the social groups. Only when there is equality between people, mainly in their relation to the means of production, when they are united by common aims, thoughts, when their relationships are characterised by social, political and ideological unity- only then do the class barriers which restrict the individual's freedom disappear, only then are formed favourable opportunities for the free expression of his strivings, and everyone's participation in the management of social work. The alien forces, dominating over people till then, now come under their control. As Engels wrote, this is a leap in humanity from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.

Certainly this character of freedom, this organisation of freedom does not suit the capitalist, and they naturally fight against it for the freedom of the owners, the freedom of exploitation, for conserving their economic and political domination. But this is always done in the name of all the members of society.

Anti-communists try to present Sovietology in the light that the sovereignty of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the communist system of education, leads to the loss of the freedom of the individual and its inimitable individual features, to changing it into a collective unit.

Regardless of these assertions, Soviet reality reveals itself differently in the spiritual life in the cities and villages, which already for the past ten years has been intensively and diversely developing on the basis of collection. This is accepted by many foreign observers. Socialism forms wide and ever increasing possibilities for the development of the worker's creative activities, the initiative of millions of people, the development of their interests, abilities and needs.

The critics of real socialism, in the past few years, especially have been persistently contrasting real socialism with social democracy, a conception of ideological and political pluralism.

Pluralism as it arose in bourgeois society is a complex and contradictory phenomenon. At first sight it appears to be a free interplay, a fight between political forces in which the one, which shows greater viability and activity wins.

However, is it possible to remove from this account the fact that all economic strength, the punitive organs, armed forces, all means of mass information and propaganda are in the hands of the capitalists? Clearly it is impossible, although the propagandists of bourgeois pluralism cavalierly bypass this situation.

In condition of the growing political activity of the working class, the monopolist proclaims the pressure of the masses on political parties to be political pluralism, an attribute of contemporary democracy. It sees it, under the present correlation of class forces, as an effective means of retaining power in its own hands by, from time to time, allowing power to pass from one bourgeois party to another. Ideological and political pluralism is presented in bourgeois propaganda as the possibility for the expression of free desire by all thereby using it to cover up the political sovereignty of monopoly capital.

It is known that certain rights and freedoms, the possibilities of defending the interests of the workers through parliamentary forms included, were gained by the working class through its political parties. The importance of these possibilities should neither be underestimated nor exaggerated. They should not be reduced because the working class obtained its rights in bitter political struggles, and they make the subsequent struggles for its interests easier. They should not be exaggerated because the bourgeoisie

supported by its economic and political strength, its ideological apparatus, its basic interests and constantly attacks the interests and rights of the working class.

However, history now knows another experience. This is the experience of the socialist countries, consisting of a union of political parties which represent the different strata of workers, with the communist, Marxist – Leninist party at its head, an experience tested in practice already for many years. Here the diverse interests of the workers are really represented by different political parties. But of course this pluralism is not at all what the reformists of socialism dream about. They want something in the spirit of bourgeois democracy.

In the Soviet Union a wide experience of the one-party system of government has been accumulated, where the Communist Party is the leading force of the society. This experience shows that within the limits of such a political organisation, a wide representation and calculation of the diverse interests, points of view, opinions of the workers is intensively carried out and the development of criticism and self-criticism is stimulated. Laws guarantee freedom of conscience and religion.

In other words, in a socialist society wide diverse activities, interests and strivings exist. But again this is not that pluralism about which our critics talk. They need a pluralism in political and ideological relations, which would perpetuate the bourgeois order. Such a pluralism in fact means suppressing the interests of the workers.

*“Any freedom – Lenin had said, - if it does not submit to the interests of the freedom of the worker from the oppression of capital, is a deception.”*

Socialist society is not guaranteed against the encroachment by certain people on the safety of the members of the society, and on the common interest as a whole. But it cannot be indifferent to such encroachments. Application of compulsion in such cases is a necessary condition for the freedom of the society, a manifestation of the concern for the freedom of its members. Of course the society has a system of social prohibition, which are directed to the defence of the socialist already won. Anti – Soviet subversive activity,

changing one's native and, anti - Socialist propaganda, war propaganda, etc., are punished as serious crimes. Supported by the apparatus of compulsion and law and order, the socialist government ensures the protection of the rights and freedom of the individual.

Of course we cannot assert that all our problems are solved and we have reached the highest development of democracy and freedom. Both develop according to the increase in the material and spiritual possibilities, consolidation of the society's political institutions. The Constitution of the USSR adopted in 1977 took a qualitative new step in the perfection of the principle and norms pertaining to the condition of the individual under socialism, his rights and freedom. The Constitution guarantees the right to choose a profession, the right to protect health, the right to take part in the management of government or social, work, the right to introduce proposals in government organs and social organisations, to criticise shortcomings in work, and appeal to the court against the acts of officials. The personal rights and freedoms of the citizens have been considerably widened. Respect for the individual, protection of the rights and freedom of the citizens are stated in the principal law, as the duties of all government organs, social organisations and officials. Norms for our morals, our rights, do not allow unceremonious invasion of personal relationships, friendship and love. Society educates its members to respect personal interests, tastes and opinions. If violation of these norms takes place they are, as a rule, condemned.

Freedom of the individual is a boon not only for the individual. Freedom is a necessary condition for the subsequent progress of the socialist society and its development into a communist society. Growth of production, solution of social problems, rising standards of scientific and artistic creation, depend on the initiatives, qualifications, discussion of theoretical and practical, without criticism and self-criticism, there can be no successful movement forward. Socialist society is pre-occupied with the development of the diverse abilities, talents and inclinations of its members. Only under these conditions, can the successful search for, and effective solution of the pressing problem be ensured.

#### IV

Marx's theory of the individual cannot be presented without

considering the all round development of free man, of work. From the *Manifesto of the Communist Party to Capital* all Marx's work is permeated with idea of the harmonic development of the individual.

In Marxism the all round development of man's abilities was first related to a real social need, not arbitrarily, but strictly scientifically. Examining the impact of the introduction of machinery in heavy industry, Marx in the first volume of *Capital*, came to the conclusion that the development of industry itself, like the question of life and death, raised the following situation: the high proportion of the population making up the reserve army of unemployed to be held in reserve to meet the changing needs of capital for purposes of exploitation, is replaced by the need of an all round suitability of the workers to meet the changing needs of production; i.e., the partial worker, a simple carrier of known partial social function, is replaced by an all round developed individual for whom the different social functions entail a change from one to another method of vital activity. In other words, due to the objective development of production, the necessity arises of replacing the partial workers with a worker capable of performing different types of production work. And if for the partial worker, functioning in production is only a means of maintaining his existence, for the all round developed individual participation in production is nothing other than a form of vital activity, an expression, a realisation of his human force, a realisation of self as an individual. This is the tendency of history.

Full realisation of this tendency is possible only after the accomplishment of the proletarian revolution and establishment of the social ownership of the means of production, on the basis of a planned economy, and a wide spread of education.

As seen from what has been said above the Marxist – Leninist statement of the problem means that it is a question of the development not only of separate individual but also of all workers. All round development of the individual is not simply a humane idea but a real objective, historical, pressing need of society.

To what extent can the problem of the all round development of the individual be counted as a practical problem of the present times? On this question theoreticians hold different opinions. Some maintain that placing the problem of all round development of the individual on the agenda is still too early, as there is yet a large number of

workers doing heavy non-mechanical work, and many other urgent problems exist which require a lot of energy and time. Further, as the necessary conditions for solving this problem are not present this is the work of the future. Others assert that in the present society, all the conditions for solving the problem of all round development of the individual have been created.

Of course this question is not a simple one. Thought, research, discussions on this topic are natural. In our opinion, it is not possible to agree with the abstract, categorical assertion that all the conditions for the all round development of the individual have been created in Soviet society, nor with the denial of the possibility of the practical handling of this problem now. The point is that the development of modern production, its practical needs of mechanisation and automation, are exactly what call for raising the standards of the professional skill, activity and responsibility of the worker, the necessity of a combination of professions. All these demands can be met only by all rounded development of the individual having a rich culture and capable of combining the functions of a qualified labourer with those of a social worker. This is brought about by the planned organisations of the socialist economy and the government organisation of the work of preparing working cadres.

Life in socialist society furnishes evidence that all round development of the individual to a certain extent is already a reality, and not only in one case. Many of our contemporaries – workers, farmers, intelligentsia, who have received a good education, professional preparedness and a many sided development in relation to culture are the new type of individual. They widely apply their knowledge and capabilities in production, participate in social work, and are interested in literature and art. It is hardly necessary to point out that these people are also infinitely different from each other, original, with their own weak and strong sides, their attachments and inclinations.

We have sufficient grounds therefore, for further progress in the all round development of man. This is brought about by the technical level of production, the qualifications of the working class and collective farmers, and a strong, scientific potential. In the present conditions, man's working essence is expressed in obtaining high and many sided qualifications, ideological maturity, moral – political responsibilities which allow the individual, in the process of work and social activity, to realise his intellectual and moral possibilities,

assert his dignity and thus sat "I".

Thus the formation of the activity and responsibilities of the members of society is not simply one of the important problems, it is the most important, central problem of the Party and Government. In its solution lies the key to solving all other problems – industrial economic, social and educational. This is the pivot of all party politics. At a meeting with the voters of Kuibishevski region, Moscow, the late Comrade K U Chernenko said: "In reorganising the conditions of people's life, it is necessary at the same time to do everything for their ideological and moral growth. It is clear that without a lot of work for the spiritual development of people, their socialist education cannot cope with the problems of perfecting mature socialism."

The rise in the welfare of the Soviet people, the intensification of the economy renewal of its spheres, perfection of its management, reconstitution of its economic mechanisms, strengthening the self financing sources, improvement in the activity of the Soviets, Party organisations, the realisation of these and many other equally important problem depends on the level of development of the initiatives and creativity of the working mass. As K U Chernenko states: The importance of what we call the human factor of economic progress does not decrease.

In other words the importance of the knowledge, interests and moods of the people." It is from this point of view that the Party approaches the questions of distribution and encouragement, strengthening discipline and law and order, carrying out school reforms, mastering Lenin's style of work in all its diversity, increasing consent in the work of management organs, developing criticism and self-criticism.

The nature of socialism as a social formation is such that it can function and develop successfully only through the activities of the masses, only with a high level of activity of the masses.

To whichever problem we turn – economic, law and order its socialist solution demands the conscientious participation of the masses, for it concerns their interests, depends on their unanimity, competence, and diligence. The question of mass activity in socialism is most

important in solving of the practical problems of the new society. Lenin underlined that socialism was not built by orders from above but is the work of the people themselves. Only the experience of millions can give the order for organising a new life. That is why the leader of the revolution, from the very first days of the new social formation, searched for concrete ways of increasing this activity and saw in it the most important condition for the functioning and developing of socialist society.

Thus we have all the grounds to assert that the scientific prognosis of Karl Marx, a result of the study of the real tendencies of capitalism, including the problem of development of the individual, is widely confirmed by life. Of course life is always more complex, diverse and contradictory than is seen in theoretical works. However, the formation of a truly socialist society convincingly demonstrates the truth of what was stated by Marx, Engels and Lenin. The present experience of socialism thus permits us to come to the conclusion: socialism, and later communism, is that necessary social formation which is a stage that should apprehend and further build on the achievements of the material and spiritual culture of humanity, on the basis of which society should further develop.

The accumulated experience show that the realisation of the advantages of socialism depends largely on the activity of the subjective factor, the rich culture of the members of the socialist society, on their common education and professional training. Now the efforts of our party and the Soviet Government are directed at the nurturing of these qualities in the individual, and the formation of favourable conditions for their further development.