

## THE NEW CONCEPTION OF HISTORY TEACHING

### IN THE USSR

The interest in history in our country now is unprecedented. The reason is clear. Our country is undergoing fundamental changes in all aspects of our lives. At this moment we are attempting to see our future. Every new phase in the development of society creates broader horizons of historical knowledge. We are in the process of reevaluating many chapters of our history and particularly Stalin's outline of the development of our society.

The time has come to dismantle the stalinist outline. Perestroika is, of course, having a great effect on the teaching of history in the schools. First of all we must reevaluate the aims of the teaching of history. Most important, I consider, is the rejection of nomenclatura, by which I mean the quantitative aspect of knowledge, refocusing our attention on the development of the individual's citizenship (education).

Overcoming dogmatism is also a basic task which can only be accomplished by dialectical exploration of the complexities of the historical process, such as the role of the human factor and the relation between the objective and the subjective. The student must understand the importance in history, not only of the general, but also the single and special phenomena, not only of single but also of alternative solutions.

Today some of our historians are taking a second look at some methodological concepts of historical science. A case in point is the critical discussion of the so called five stages of development of human society. The concept of human progress is also undergoing changes in the direction of new criteria, regarding the value of human progress, and its price.

However, certain basic precepts retain their unquestionable relevance, for instance the principle of historicism. A new approach has been proclaimed by General Secretary M. Gorbachev to the relationship between class interest and universal human interest. This is a part of a new way of thinking in the era of potential nuclear destruction.

All of these ideas are reflected in the new program for the study of history. This is a temporary program. At present some groups of historians and specialists in the teaching of history are working out the new conception of studying history.

What are the new features of this program? First of all we are trying to overcome too much emphasis on political and ideological aspects. More emphasis is to be given to developing civic consciousness. We are reevaluating the period of the Stalin personality cult. More attention is to be paid to the study of various political parties and social classes and groups.

Some suggest that alternatives be included in historical study. The names of many prominent personalities, who played significant roles in our history, are being restored (Bucharin, Kame-nev, Zinoviev, Rykov etc.).

The dominant role of politics in history will be modified to include in social, cultural, and spiritual themes. An example of the departure from the stalinist concept of history is the recently published sillabus for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, covering the period from 1921 to 1941. I can name some of the chapter titles:

- " The dismanteling of Lenins New Economic Policy and the establishing of one man rule".
- " Revision of Lenin's cooperative plans. The complete collectivisation of agriculture".
- " The abandonment of democracy and its consequences".
- " The anti-Stalin opposition and the reasons for its defeat".

The transition from dogmatic to creative teaching requires changing of all the methods. The main principles of the new style of work are:

1. Greater use of the method of dialogue instead of monologue.
2. Accelerating the development of the creative, independent activity of the pupils. The greater use of the methods of discussion, debate, seminars and conferences.
3. Encouraging the emotional factor as a part of creative learning. In this regard much attention is to be paid to testing varied teaching aids. At this time we are producing many educational films about the lives of famous personalities. For instance: political leaders like Lunacharsky, Kalinin, Kirov, Kuybeshev, Ordjonikidze etc; scientists like Kozolev, Tupolev, Vavilov, Kapitza etc; prominent military commanders, who were victims of Stalin's terror: Thuchachevsky, Blucher, Rokossovsky, Shukov etc.

History is becoming not only a study of facts and events, it depicts the historical epoch through the prism of human personalities.

These films have become very popular. We are continuing to produce more and more such films, and videotapes also.

4. We are starting special classes and special schools for the intensive study of history. In these schools pupils study such additional disciplines as historiography, archival science, numismatics, heraldry and so on. They are preparing themselves for careers in museums or archives. - Programs are now being worked out. These programs are a result of experimental work. Recently a booklet appeared, containing the first results.
5. One of the steps towards democratisation of teaching is the effort to allow teachers to use up to 20 percent of the program at their own discretion.
6. One of our most important tasks is greatly to improve the quality of our text books, which have been criticised from many quarters. It is now accepted that we need to have alternative text books which relate better to other teaching aids and vice versa.

We are now devoting much more attention to the history of the people of many national republics. The schools of the national republics have the right today to extend the hours devoted to the study of their national histories.

In some republics, for example in Estonia and Georgia, historians are writing new text books not only of their national history but also on history of the USSR. So we can say the study of history in the USSR is now developing in democratic ways.

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