

# TR

# Theoretical Review

A JOURNAL OF MARXIST-LENINIST THEORY AND DISCUSSION

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P.O. BOX 3692 TUCSON, AZ 85722  
P.O. BOX 269 DORCHESTER, MA 02122

Line of March, Editors  
P.O. Box 2729  
Oakland, CA 94602

Comrades:

Your proposal has two parts: first it that we engage in debates with you on the level of theory "to bring the discussion of Althusserian marxism squarely into the center of the theoretical struggle within our trend."

The Theoretical Review has striven from its inception to put discussion of its politics and theoretical framework before the party-building movement. As you point out, it is clear to the most casual reader of the TR that we have used the work of several contemporary theorists including Althusser, Bettelheim, Balibar and Poulantzas, etc., to illuminate the current state of marxism and the communist movement, here and abroad. TR's earliest work concentrated on developing and popularizing a marxist-leninist theoretical framework that was new to the U.S. communist movement. In the years TR has been publishing, we have moved in the direction of increasing politicization of our line, through the application of our theoretical framework to the pressing political problems facing the communist movement. This internal development coincided with criticisms of our work, coming from within and without the ranks of TR supporters; some comrades said that we were trying to conduct political struggle only on the terrain of theory. Among the most critical were prominent members of the National Network of Marxist-Leninist Clubs (now Line of March). You criticized us for wanting to engage in a "sterile debate" over concerns which you characterized as points of "methodology".

We're glad that your point of view has changed, and you now recognize the importance of our differences with the rectification and fusion lines on the level of marxist theory. But it was not our earlier work, which intended to make exactly that point, which convinced you. In fact, it was the development of our positions on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, on Poland, and on the current situation in the U.S. that has apparently brought home to LoM and to others that LoM and TR are indeed working from two very diametrically opposed positions, for example, on Poland: LoM supporting the state apparatus, and TR the workers' movement.

Our analysis has been a beginning attempt to fill the need for a revitalized marxist-leninist theory as a guide to action, and this

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work has been our contribution to a party-building movement which for years has recognized that "theory is primary" in this period. Therefore, we completely disagree with your assessment of "objective irresponsibility" on our part towards the future of anti-revisionist communism in this country.

Our increasingly political focus has been a positive development. For that reason, it would be a step backwards for TR, and for the party-building movement, to retreat from the terrain of political line struggle to debate simply in the realm of theory. We have seen in practice that struggles on the theoretical level alone, without political focus, not only do not answer political questions, but fail even to highlight what is at stake in the struggle. A debate of the kind you suggest would be just such a struggle.

The second suggestion you make is that TR unilaterally clarify our position on the current state and direction of the anti-dogmatist, anti-revisionist trend. First, it should be noted that failure to respond to the agenda LoM has chosen for the rest of the movement, does not constitute indifference to party-building tasks. It would be strange if two centers based, as LoM points out, on such different approaches to the problem, did share an agenda, item for item. Where our tasks coincide with LoM's agenda, we will continue to engage in joint discussion.

As to the party-building movement, TR is in the process of developing just such a statement as LoM requests. LoM knows that we are rethinking what the anti-dogmatist, anti-revisionist trend represents, and also the issue of how party-building has traditionally been viewed in the anti-revisionist left in this country. This discussion is going on among TR affiliates nationwide, and no firm conclusions have yet been reached. We do not, however, regard the disintegration of the Organizing Committee for an Ideological Center as the passing of just another group, or a sign of "maturation", as does LoM. The face of the anti-dogmatist, anti-revisionist trend has changed drastically in just a few years, and we are taking some time to analyze what it means. The results of our discussion will be published in an editorial statement in a future TR.

In Struggle,

The Boston and Tucson Editorial Boards of the  
Theoretical Review.