
Correspondence

Dear TR:

The article on Economism in TR #15 is great. The writing is very concise and thorough. I find that I often recognize errors in my thinking when I read TR. I'm glad you are there, doing such a good job. I guess I'm an advanced worker struggling to learn how to use Marxism-Leninism as an approach to life. TR is an invaluable tool for me. Thanks.

En Lucha,
T.M.
Colorado Springs, Co.

Folks:

Thanks for the copy of *Theoretical Review*. I'm very impressed. I don't consider myself a Marxist-Leninist, but I found it excellent, and very interesting. I especially appreciated Paul Costello's "A Critical History of the New Communist Movement, 1969-1979" (this article advertised in the *Guardian* is what caught my eye to begin with) and "Anti-Revisionist Lessons for Party Building Today" by Scott Robinson. I especially liked that you folks are really challenging some of the bases of the anti-revisionist anti-dogmatist movement. This willingness and a refreshing lack of rhetoric is what's so nice about your journal. I'm very encouraged and excited by Paul's willingness to challenge the NCM ideas of bringing back the line and practice of the CPUSA before 1956, which has always seemed absurd to me. Nor have I especially liked the NCM adulation of Stalin, which has pretty much been a very major line of demarcation between my feelings and the anti-rev anti-dog movement. And challenging the other two NCM assumptions, that of the tradition of the sixties' mass struggle, and the Chinese tradition, are also very refreshing and promising to me. I'm really looking forward to reading more of your work in this area. As far as I can tell, the *Guardian*, which I read regularly, has not done this.

SO . . . I didn't think I'd do it (what, me? Subscribe to a Marxist-Leninist theoretical journal??? Nah-never!), but here's eight bucks. Please enter my sub. I hope you put a lot of much-needed work into challenging those assumptions. I as well look forward to reading about your "primacy of theory line" and more good, critical histories.

By the way, I thought the article by "In Struggle," "Anti-Revisionist Movements in Canada, 1945-1970" was a vivid exception to the refreshing lack of rhetoric, dogma, and stilted style in the rest of your journal. This article was almost embarrassing in its overuse of pat, overused phrases, and course, gross rhetoric and style. That's the exact kind of thing that turns me—and other people—off to the M-L movement. It reminded me of the worst excesses of RCP or some of the pro-Albania groups and was not at all worthy of the down-to-earth high quality of the rest of your journal.

In Solidarity,
R.C.
San Francisco, Ca.

Dear Theoretical Review:

Let me echo the remarks of "K.C." printed in the letters column of your excellent issue #14 on page 26. I would add to the work he cites (Claudin and Bettelheim), the names of Kostas Movrakis, Harry Cleaver, and the seminal work by Philip Corrigan, et al, *Socialist Construction and Marxist Theory, Bolshevism and its Critique*.

The idea of a thorough-going critique of Bolshevism as a "problematic" seems to me to be a heuristic tool we, as aspiring revolutionaries in the U.S., have needed for a long time but have been too timid to grasp; no doubt for valid reasons: the danger of being confused with Trotskyites, social democrats or worse. Hero worship and personality cults have played their part, as well as certain "vested interests" on the part of some "leading comrades."

History has demonstrated that various incorrect lines and practices can find a theoretical "rationale" in certain formulations in the Marxist-Leninist "classics." Often the passages chosen for this purpose are taken out of context, but often as well, there is sufficient ambiguity in the works themselves—notably in Engels' "Dialectics of Nature" and Lenin's "Materialism and Empirico-Criticism." Certain habits of Marx, certain tendencies of his mode of expression, not so much in substantive rigorous exposition, but in passages where he makes a quick summation before preceding to the point he wants to explain, or what he calls in places "a general sketch"—leave the door open for confusion.

For example, his use of the present indicative "is" opens the door to idealist interpretations—abstract "general eternal truths" not empirically grounded, or unhistorical "universal principles." That is, it is sometimes not clear whether "is" refers to a concrete historical process or to the realm of abstract theory. My point is not that there was any confusion in Marx's mind about the difference, only that he may have overestimated some of his future readers.

I applaud Paul Costello for his excellent response to Tim Patterson. I agree on almost all points, excepting only the remarks on democratic centralism. On this point, I find myself unable to completely accept either position, but I think that Patterson comes off a little better. I have to admit to a great deal of doubt and uncertainty as to what line to take on the question of party structure and working class organization. I think this question needs to be discussed a great deal before any final resolution will be possible. The one thing vitally necessary is to avoid making a *fetish* of any particular form or practice from the past. While the "Leninist" form has led to successes, it has also led to defeats. The organizational forms which have been developed in El Salvador seem to me particularly interesting—as do those in Zimbabwe and Nicaragua.

Svetoyar Stojanovic has had some important things to say on all this—not the last word certainly, but he raises a lot of the right questions: "a communist organization should be distinguished not only by what it demands of its members, but also in what its members demand of it."

Even writers like Poulantzas and Michael Albert ("What Is To Be Undone" [!]) need to be read and the problems they address clarified.

The Struggle Continues,
D.O.
Sacramento, Ca.