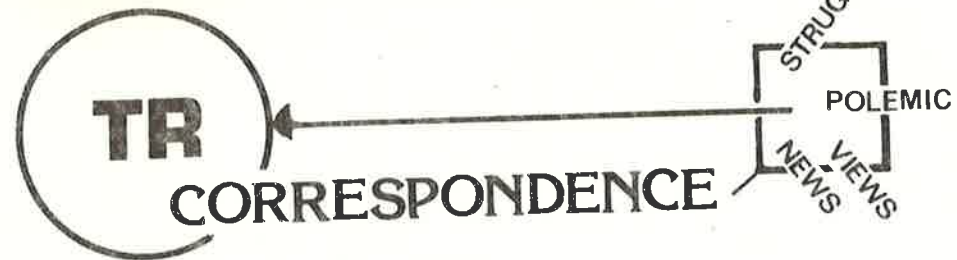


Dear Comrades,

Thanks for the copy of *Theoretical Review*. It is a most impressive journal. It is obviously far more advanced in theoretical terms than any other Marxist-Leninist journal being produced in the U.S., and succeeds in doing what the Althusserian publications here always failed to do--make the theoretical positions developed by Althusser and his co-workers politically relevant. We wish you every success with your venture.

As you are probably aware, the ideological formation of the Left in this country is very different from that in the U.S. The most obvious feature is the dominance of orthodox Trotskyist ideology, and the fact that anti-revisionist Leninism is practically nonexistent. However, many of the differences between the Trotskyist leftists here and the Maoist leftists in the U.S. are probably superficial, and the various spontaneist and economist ideologies governing their day to day practices are probably very similar. Another difference between the U.S. and United Kingdom however, is that whereas you have a dearth of left theoretical as opposed to agitational papers, we here have a surfeit of both. If you go into any leftist bookshop you could probably find a good dozen theoretical journals, plus a substantially larger number of theoretical pamphlet series, etc. The market is saturated. The great bulk of these are theoretically worthless from a scientific standpoint and fall into two broad categories of theoretical ideology: elaborated theoretical appologies for the particular dogmatism adopted by the group publishing the journal; academicist and speculative articles generally dominated by humanist or Hegelian ideology.

Given the saturation of the market, we found that our journal [*the Communist Formation-T1*] was an unmarketable commodity--the greater part of the print run of the first edition is still unsold. This confrontation with social practice forced us into a reexamination of our decision to publish it in the first place, and we came to the conclusion that our action in doing so was unreflexive and unscientific, a classic case of "because one is a bonze one must toll the bell," because you are a Marxist group you must publish a journal. Alongside this was an uncriticised acceptance of the notion that proletarian political parties can be formed out of the numerical growth and merging of leftist sects: the most persistent illusion of modern leftism. We came to the realisation of a point that should have been obvious from a cursory examination of Marx and Engels own political practice, that there are two necessary conditions for the formation of a new proletarian political party: the existence of an ideological current that understands the conjuncture and the political possibilities that it opens up; the occurrence of an upsurge in the class struggle which draws new forces into political struggle outside previously existing parties. In these circumstances a well developed ideological tendency has the chance of becoming the



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hegemonic ideology of the most politically active sector of the masses, so that when a new party is formed it appears to coalesce out of the ideological positions which have already gained wide currency, its ideology appears to the advanced sectors as their own ideology.

From this we concluded that the key task of the day was to develop a new ideological current or tendency, and that this question should be strictly separated from the construction of an organisation. For this task, the "house" journal of a political organisation is a totally inappropriate instrument. What was required was an independent magazine of much wider appeal. We are initiating a project to set up an independent socialist/progressive magazine that would gear itself to a non-marxist audience, which means that it would have to be able to sell on the basis of the quality of its content. The content would have to be interesting and informative enough to make people read it who are not motivated by loyalty to an organisation of tendency. This means that it will have to be able to produce analysis and commentary on national and international affairs, economic and political developments, the social significance of new developments in science and technology, plus popularisations of the components of a socialist minimum programme for Britain. Just what the chances of launching such a publication at the present are, we do not know.

Fraternally,

w.p.c.  
Manchester, England  
[for the Communist Formation]

Comrades,

As I see the *Theoretical Review*, it has three distinct (yet, of course, inter-related) topics or subjects:

1. theoretical and philosophical formation (Althusser, *Communist Formation*),
2. theory as intervention in class struggle (articles on "Theory and Guardian Clubs," "Defining the Central Tasks for Party Building"),
3. historical analysis ("Comintern and Factory Cells," and "Analyzing China Since Mao's Death").

Further, we see the principal purposes of the *Theoretical Review* as being:

1. Intervene in class struggle,
2. Promote the primacy of theory and theoretical formation in this period (fight the low level of theoretical development),
3. Develop the basis of building a "genuine" communist party.

Finally, that the level of theoretical development is low (even worse, that the party building movement thinks it "knows" enough theory).

Therefore, it would seem appropriate, if not imperative, that the *Theoretical Review* intervene at the level of where the party building movement is now, to show the importance of theory and to show them the next step. However, at times it seems that the *Theoretical Review* operates within a problematic where the primacy of theory is understood to be "primary." This leaves out those people who do not accept theory as primary. So to promote your purpose of winning the

party building movement to the primacy of theory the level of intervention must be at the level they occupy now.

I would advance that the *Theoretical Review* should develop and encourage those articles that are more polemical in character. That the intervention of theory take place in the struggles of the movement. I think the article in Number Five, "Defining the Central Task of Party Building," is excellent, as well as the article on "Theory and the Guardian Clubs" in Number Three.

I think both these articles (there are others, but these stand out) demonstrate the importance of theory and why theory needs to be primary at this time by intervening in the struggles and questions of the movement today. We have used a couple of articles from the *Theoretical Review* in our study group. While several of us see the primacy of theory, that concept is not consolidated within the group (although our practice speaks to the primacy of theory). Only when we defer from philosophical-theoretical to the realm of political struggles does the importance of theory show itself. I think that the *Theoretical Review* could do much in winning the movement to the primacy of theory by intervening in the struggles the movement is involved in.

Overall, the *Theoretical Review* is excellent. I find it very helpful in my development, and it is useful in articulating concepts necessary for the party building movement.

T.L.  
Kansas City, Missouri

(Endnotes continued from page 41.)

15. Maurice Thorez (1900-1964), General Secretary of the PCF from 1930 until shortly before his death, was the foremost leader of the Party during the Popular Front and the resistance, and a Minister in the French government in 1944-47.
16. Paul Henri Dietrich Holbach (1723-1789) and Claude Adrien Helvetius (1715-1771) were both prominent materialist philosophers who helped to lay the basis in philosophy and moral theory for the bourgeois revolutions of the 19th century.
17. The 20th Congress of the PCF was held Dec. 13-17, 1972; the 21st Congress Oct. 24-27, 1974; the 22nd Congress, Feb. 4-8, 1976.
18. In 1936 the election to office in France of a Popular Front government was followed by a nationwide strike movement in which workers throughout France seized control of the factories.
19. Sebastien Le Prestre Vauban (1633-1707) was a French military engineer who directed the fortification of French frontier.