

IN PARTIAL PAYMENT
Class Struggle, Sexuality and the Gay Movement
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This is the first printing of "In Partial Payment" in the pamphlet form for which it was originally written. More than three years have passed since it was written in 1978 and two since it was published in the Winter 1979-80 issue of Urgent Tasks.

Often writers are allowed to make revisions or additions before a new edition is published. Even if there were an opportunity to do so here, and there is not, this article would not be changed (except to straighten my lay-out). It had a specific purpose at the time it was written. It is to be hoped that it fulfilled that purpose, and while much remains to be written on the subject it will have to be in the form of different articles and books for these much different times. When it was first written there had been no Lesbian and Gay March on Washington, no Lavender Left Network or Dykes Against Racism Everywhere. Nor were there assembled neutron bombs.

The original purpose seemed simple. A friend extracted a promise from me almost a decade ago not to join any Marxist organization which did not have a reasonable position on lesbian and gay liberation. Of course that was not the sole criteria, but it proved a useful one. If there was any value to this thing called Marxism then it should have some usefulness in explaining the phenomenon of sexuality and gay liberation.

The article resulted when it became clear that few organizations had done more than put their previously existing prejudices on paper. Some individuals had done prodigious work but, perhaps because it was outside of an organizational framework, they lacked a developed strategic perspective. Without that, gay liberation and gay rights just become items to be tacked onto the list of 'other' struggles. And ones which are readily dropped when prospects become riper elsewhere.

There have been a number of criticisms directed at the article. Many focus on the "disrespect" shown for other Marxist groupings. There is a hillbilly saying that in order to educate a mule one must first get its attention. The best way to do this is with a 2 by 4. There is also a saying of Lenin's that it is impossible to discredit Marxists so long as they do not discredit themselves. I hope the point is clear.

Others have remarked that sections are sketchy or obscure. This is unfortunately true. In addition to my own occasionally dense style there is a sprinkling of Marxist jargon such as "great nation chauvinism," rather than the needed explanations of such terms. Where there are a few paragraphs rather than a few chapters, as with the history of sexuality, the brevity came from a desire to make the article accessible and thereby useful.

All the cutting left more room for the discussion of alliances, a topic which is even more germane at a time when the Klan is organizing openly for a war. Gay men and lesbians will presumably be included with Blacks, Jews and communists as the initial targets. It is hoped that anyone reading that section will realize that the struggles against lesbian and gay oppression inevitably take place on a terrain determined by the general level of struggles of national liberation and working class forces.

Finally, many people contributed to this work other than those

listed in the footnotes. I hope they accept this as a partial payment of my debt to them.

A. Rausch 9/7/81

IN PARTIAL PAYMENT: CLASS STRUGGLE, SEXUALITY, AND GAY LIBERATION

As in every other sphere of American society when sex is made the issue, it is in order to evade the fact that the foundation has been developed for total relations between one man and another, and between man and woman, of which sex is only a part.

— C. L. R. James, *Negroes and American Democracy*

In June of 1969 a routine police raid in a popular bar in New York City met an unexpected response. The police had cleared the bar with shoves and expletives. Rather than dispersing, the crowd, which included a number of Puerto Ricans and women, locked the police inside the bar and set it on fire. [1] When the police broke out of the building, they were hailed with bottles and coins. Several were also physically attacked by members of the crowd, which had now grown to a considerable size, swelled by members of the surrounding community.

Four nights of sporadic street fighting ensued.

Two months later a march was called to protest the continued police harassment of the community. As the march wound from Times Square to the West Village, it halted in front of the Women's House of Detention to shout slogans of solidarity to the women inside. As the crowd grew to 3,000, the women prisoners

began tossing burning newspapers out of their windows. Another battle with the police began, two police cars were overturned, seven officers were injured, and eighteen arrests were made.

Two years after the rebellions in Detroit and Newark and hundreds of inner-city riots, one year after the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the nation-wide riots following Martin Luther King's assassination, the Columbia student strike and French general strike, the Chicago Democratic Party convention demonstrations, and the resistance to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, amid the height of the anti-war movement and the beginnings of the women's movement, the gay liberation movement began with the first public, militant and *mass* resistance by gay people to their oppression.

Within a year after the first Stonewall Riots, militant gay organizations had been created in dozens of cities and universities across the U.S. Many took the name Gay Liberation Front in a conscious homage to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. The diversity of the groups' structures and political stances - embracing aspects of Maoism, feminism, anarchism, New Left politics, and positions more compatible with the Democratic Party - was that of a mass movement existing in a milieu of social change and confrontation on many fronts.

The apparent suddenness of the gay movement's appearance on the world's view belies the actual centuries of individual resistance and years of concerted efforts to reform social attitudes through legislation and education. While during the 1960s a few dozen members of homophile groups yearly picketed Independence Hall in Philadelphia on the 4th of July to protest the treatment of homosexuals, in 1978 almost 400,000 in the U.S. marched in support of gay rights during the ninth commemoration of the Stone-wall Riots. Thousands also rallied in Canada, France, Spain, Japan, West Germany, and England, even while clandestine celebrations occurred in Greece, Brazil and, in all likelihood, every

metropolitan na-tion. [2]

Stonewall marked a change. No longer could the existence of gay people and the questions raised by their existence be relegated to ob-scure and obscurantist medical jour-nals. Capitalist science, law, and re-ligion were challenged on every assumption about homosexuality. And in the challenge, the failure of the North American Left to do more than accept bourgeois thought was exposed.

This paper is intended as a dis-cussion of some of the questions raised by the gay movement and the failure of the Left to address them. Some limitations and defini-tions should be noted first:

For the most part the discussion is limited to a consideration of North America and Europe. This is necessary given the lack of available information, but it is a definite limitation.

Throughout, the words “gay” or “homosexual” are used. This in-cludes both lesbians and gay men except when they are referred to as distinct groupings. The common-place phrase “gay people” is also used, but should not be assumed to be linked with the notion that either gay men or lesbians are a people, as used in Leninist termi-nology as a synonym for nation. Nowhere can evidence be shown of a struggle by either lesbians or gay men for the control of a territory sufficient to construct a nation, even if some other aspects of “na-tionhood” might superficially ap-pear from time to time.

Finally, this paper is intended as a beginning discussion of some questions. As such, while it must be a critique of the prevalent Left and socialist views of the gay move-ment, it is not intended as a guide or critique of the movement. Gay Marxists have created and will cre-ate the theory and strategy that their movement requires.

II

Working-class consciousness can-not be genuinely political con-sciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases, without exception, of tyranny, op-pression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected. More-over, to respond from a Social-Democratic [Marxist – ar] point of view and no other. The consci-ous-ness of the masses of the workers cannot be genuine class consci-ous-ness, unless the workers learn to ob-serve from concrete, and above all from topical (current), political facts and events, every other social class and all the manifestations of the intellectual, ethical and political life of these classes; unless they learn to apply in practice the mate-rialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata and groups of the population.

— Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*[[3](#)]

What Is To Be Done? is studied and cited so often that one would expect major portions of it to be memorized by most of the North American Left. Yet the unequivocal words cited above have been ig-nored. The gay movement was granted a grudging nod of recogni-tion from most Left groups when it emerged, except by those who greeted it with open hostility. Since then most socialist and revolution-ary organizations have been forced to respond to it, if not theoretically then at least organizationally.

The ten years since Stonewall have been long enough for some to make complete fools of themselves on this issue. The Revolutionary Communist Party calls for “abolish-ment” of homosexuality in its Draft Programme. “(P)rostitutes, drug addicts, homosexuals and others... will be re-educated to become productive members of so-ciety with working-class consciousness.”[[4](#)] One wonders whether the RCP will use anectine, lobotomies or electro-shock therapy as the means of

instruction. It is, of course, the “re-educators’ who must be educated.[[a](#)]

The RCP only appears to be the worst offender because it parades its ignorance in public. The Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) [formerly October League] has chosen not to print an opinion on the subject - perhaps while waiting for a definitive statement from the *Beijing Review*. The Communist Party USA does not print opinions or articles on the gay movement, except for subdued comments about issues that “hold great potential for divisiveness and destabilization.” [[b](#)]

Only among those segments of the North American Left that have been substantially affected by the women’s movement has there been any sustained effort to grapple with the theoretical and political problems posed by the gay movement. Various Trotskyist groupings, those organizations and publications described as “socialist-feminist,” some of the forces identifying themselves as “anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist” and those that fit (uneasily) within the “anti-imperialist tendency,” have taken positions. The best of these bear examination, but first it is worthwhile to look at what existed in Marxist thinking before Stonewall.

If a search is made through the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin (and Trotsky, Stalin, and Mao), there are perhaps two paragraphs that can be said to apply specifically to homosexuality. Both occur in Engels’ *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* [[c](#)]:

this degradation of the women was avenged on the men and degraded them also till they fell into the abominable practice of sodomy and degraded alike their gods and themselves with the myth of Ganymede. [[6](#)]

to the classical love poet of antiquity, old Anacreon, sexual love in our sense mattered so little that it did not even matter to him which sex his beloved was.[7]

Leaving aside the second quote, which can hardly be seen as a thorough commentary on the subject, we have, from among the hundreds of thousands of sentences written by the major critics of their epoch, *one* which deals with the subject *in passing*. This is sparse pickings for quotation-mongers and dogmatists - though, to be sure, the sentence has been invoked. And just as surely, sentences can be found in the same work which stand against such interpretations, as with:

When these people [under socialism - ar] are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual - and that will be the end of it.[8]

This absence of any body of “classical” writings on the subject has had a dual effect. On the one hand, the vacuum has kept the dogmatists at bay, since to write anything longer than a page would require some original analysis on their part. On the other hand, it has probably helped call forth a number of analyses by gay Marxists and neo-Marxists since there are no tomes to weigh heavily on their heads and hands. The only regret that should be registered is that no current analysis, Marxist or otherwise, is forced to confront an example of previously existing Marxist thought on the matter. [d]

Fortunately, the sum total of Marxist thought is not contained in the writings of Marx and Engels. The stronghold of the world workers’ movement until the October Revolution was in Germany. It was there, coincident with and following the greatest growth of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the trade

union movement and women's rights organizations that the first gay liberation organization was formed in 1897. [10] During the period from 1895 till the early 1930's, the SPD and its Third International successor, the German Communist Party (KPD), maintained a consistent position of support for homosexual rights. While the activity of the German socialists and communists cannot be branded as a model for us - they had only an embryonic gay movement and the predominant view, even among homosexuals, was that gay people were a "third sex" - it is still instructive for us in terms of what was done given these limitations.

Two examples should illustrate their stance. In April and May of 1895, Eduard Bernstein defended Oscar Wilde in the pages of *Die Neue Zeit*, the leading journal of the Second International. Wilde, who had just been arrested in England for "gross indecencies," was being virulently attacked by the English press. Bernstein's articles, in sharp contrast, called for a scientific perspective on the "subject of sex life" and proceeded to attempt a historical overview of sexuality, stressing that "moral attitudes are historical phenomena" and that nothing humans did was "natural," but rather a reflection of the development of society at that point.

Bernstein also argued that since the SPD was strong enough to "exert an influence on the character of statutory law" it had a responsibility to attempt the overturning of the anti-gay sections of the German penal code. In fact, this is what happened. August Bebel, leader of the SPD, spoke in the Reichstag in January of 1898 urging its members to sign a petition begun by the German gay rights group, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee. Bebel was the first major German political figure to sign the petition, which called for repeal of Paragraph 175 of the German penal code, which outlawed homosexual acts between males. (In a gesture of equality it was later extended to women.)

The SPD Reichstag representatives continued to support the campaign during parliamentary debate. Bebel also continued to speak for it and the SPD's newspaper, *Vorwärts*, carried articles about the campaign. A degree of the appreciation seen for these actions is apparent in the ad in German papers before the 1912 elections:

REICHSTAG ELECTION! 3rd sex! Consider this!! In the Reichstag on May 31, 1905 members of the Center, the Conservatives, and the Economic Alliance spoke *against* you; but *for* you, the orators of the *Left!* Agitate and vote accordingly!

Until the forced demise of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and its international counterpart, the World League for Sexual Reform, in 1935, individual leaders of both groups maintained an allegiance to the workers' movement. In announcing the disbanding of the WLSR, one of its presidents cited differences with those who did not realize that "it is impossible to reach the goals of the WLSR without at the same time fighting for a socialist revolution." By this time, however, the gay movement and the German Communist Party had parted paths.[[11](#)]

The KPD's change from being the staunchest supporter of gay rights to queer-baiting the leadership of the Nazi S.A., as they eventually did, can only be understood in relation to the changes within the Bolshevik Party and the USSR during the same period.[[e](#)]

A few strokes of the pen had eliminated all laws against homo-sexual acts in the USSR. The October Revolution made possible this and all the other new laws in regard to sexual relationships in the new state. The Bolshevik approach to this was set forth in a 1923 pamphlet by Dr. Grigorii Bakkis, the director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene. He wrote:

The relationship of Soviet law to the sexual sphere is based on the principle that the demands of the vast majority of the people correspond to and are in harmony with the findings of contemporary science... [Soviet legislation] declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters so long as nobody is injured and no one's interests are encroached upon.

This legislation was recognized internationally by homosexual rights advocates as the most advanced of its kind.

Yet only ten years after the revolution, Soviet representatives were referring to homosexuality as a "social peril" and in 1934 new legislation was signed by Kalinin, the President of the USSR, making homosexual acts between males punishable by from 3-8 years in jail. Such laws are still in force, especially against dissidents. S. Paradzhanov, a film director, was sentenced to 5 years in a labor camp in 1974 for such "offenses." [13]

The reversal of the progress that had been made during the revolutionary era demands as much explanation as the initial achievement, if not more, but some conclusions can be made for our purposes: while the spirit of Marxism existed in Germany, given life by a rising workers' movement and women's movement, the SPD and its Communist descendant, the KPD, represented the firmest allies of gay rights in Germany. While a workers' state existed in the USSR, there was more guaranteed freedom for lesbians and gay men than has been known before or since.

These must be seen as starting points for any current Marxist stance.[f]

III

There is a direct lineage from the German homosexual rights movement - which can be held responsible for the attention given

the question by the SPD and the Bolsheviki - to the U.S. gay movement. That lineage began when Henry Gerber, a U.S. citizen, was stationed in the Army of Occupation in Germany from 1920 to 1923. There he learned of the German homosexual rights movement. Upon his return to the States, Gerber began organizing the first homosexual rights organization in the U.S., the Society for Human Rights. Much as Marxists have time and again attempted to mechanically transpose the structure and politics of successful revolutions to the conditions of the U.S., Gerber moved to charter the Society in Illinois as a legal, public organization. This step, taken in 1924, after the Palmer Raids, massive deportations of radical “aliens,” and a series of setbacks to the class struggle after 1919, can only be described as misguided. When one of the officers of the Society was arrested because of complaints from his wife, an inquisition began. The officers of the Society were arrested on trumped-up charges, its records confiscated without warrant, and all involved lost their jobs in the process. Despite this, Gerber continued his efforts. In 1934 he wrote in a literary magazine:

Capitalism, loyally supported by the churches, has established a Public Policy that the Sacred Institution of Monogamy must be enforced... Monogamy is the ideal of this state and all deviations from this ideal are strictly suppressed, including free love in all its forms, birth control and homosexuality. In Russia, where the government is no longer capitalistic and is not bound to religious sex superstitions, sex is free.

Ironically, the very year that Gerber wrote was the year of the repeal of the laws passed after the October Revolution.[[14](#)]Mass arrests of gays had begun in January of 1934.[[15](#)]

The originator of the Mattachine Society, the first “successful” gay organization in the U.S., had as his first lover a person who had been in contact with the Chicago-based Society for Human

Rights. Though Henry Hay says he was only influenced “indirectly” by that knowledge of the previous attempt, it is obvious that the idea of an organization for gays was planted, even if only by way of negative example.

The first step that Hay took when he decided in 1951 that he had to begin organizing gay people was to recommend to the Communist Party USA that he be expelled after eighteen years as a member. Rather than do that in light of his years of service and work as a teacher at the California Labor School, they released him as “a security risk but a life-long friend of the people.”

The original founders of the Mattachine Society were all either former CPUSA members or fellow travellers. [g] As a result of their perspective as both gays and Leftists, the original intent of the group was to develop a historical understanding of homosexuality and to organize as a group *demanding* equality. Hay and his comrades took the first public action in a petition-gathering effort against the Korean War at a gay beach in Los Angeles; some of the contacts they gained in this way were later organized into their first study and discussion groups. The first months of patient work produced hundreds of members.

Because of the post-war anti-communist and anti-gay atmosphere, Mattachine’s founders chose to organize in a classical tiered fashion, with secrecy maintained internal to each tier. The success of this approach turned into its opposite. A political columnist in California warned his readers that an organization of homosexuals was growing and could become a place where “communists and other agitators” could foment dissent. The exposure in the press and the threat of a Congressional investigation which might reveal the leadership tier’s previous Party ties brought a decision to respond to a growing demand among the membership for a convention - and election of the leadership of the Mattachine Society.

At the convention it became clear that the majority of the members were committed to the idea that “all we want to do is have a little law changed, and otherwise we’re exactly the same as everybody else, except in bed.” Faced with this coup, and mindful that the Congressional investigation might destroy the organization, Hay and his co-organizers left the leadership. The idea that “we’re the same, except in bed” was to characterize the Mattachine Society’s outlook until Stonewall.

The fate of the Mattachine founders after their defeat will sound familiar to those who have seen movements fail. Alcoholism, suicide and cynicism were the lot of most. Henry Hay continues, and continues to urge on the struggle for an autonomous militant gay movement.

The failure was not that of Mattachine’s founders alone, however. Hay’s action in forming the group and simultaneously leaving the CPUSA was based on the knowledge that “the left was the first potential grouping to deny social potential to the Minority by going on public record with the opinion that the perverts (note the term) were socially degenerate and to be avoided as one avoids the scum of the earth.” To have expected help from that quarter would have been self-deception at best.[[16](#)]

It is here we can draw the first line of demarcation for the North American Left, between those who feel that gays are “the scum of the earth” and thus, while perhaps not candidates for immediate extermination, are nonetheless not deserving of the protection of bourgeois legality, and those who feel the struggle for democratic rights for gays demands the support of revolutionaries with the same considerations given to all democratic rights struggles. [[h](#)]

The second stance holds sway among the North American Left at the moment, but it is necessary to finish with those who cannot

un-derstand such ideas and the neces-sity for communists to work in the gay movement.

If it is accepted that gay people are oppressed - and there are some who argue otherwise, just as there are “Marxists” who argue that Marx had no dialectical method - then there are only two arguments against the principle of supporting gay rights. The first is that gays are the product of hormonal imbal-ances (or genetic mistakes, in their blunter terminology) and are thus more a concern for the geneticist and endocrinologist than a problem for social activists to address. Aside from its ignorance of every major survey of the sexual behavior of humans, this argument has a basis in bourgeois science, so it will be answered in a separate section. It should be noted that those who cite it are allying themselves unwittingly with the most backward, racist, and usually dishonest ele-ments of the scientific community.

The second argument is more pernicious. It holds that while gays are the victims of oppression under capitalism, they are also products of bourgeois decadence and thus homosexuality will disappear under socialism (or communism, depend-ing on who is arguing). The propo-nents of this schema thereby feel re-lieved of the necessity of supporting democratic rights for gay people.

If this “reasoning” were strictly followed then such people would also argue that there is no necessity of struggling against national op-pression, since nations will disap-pear under socialism. Or, better yet, there is no obligation to strug-gle against workers’ exploitation and oppression since the working *class* was created during capitalism and will disappear under commu-nism! [i]

Since those who argue such no-tions usually claim to be “Lenin-ists” it might be useful to cite some of Lenin’s practice. He, as is well known, not only disavowed religion personally, but also actively sup-ported the propagation of atheism among the Soviet

peoples after the revolution. Nonetheless he supported the democratic rights of the Russian religious sects. At the second Congress of the RSDLP, one year after the writing of *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin moved this resolution:

Bearing in mind that in many of its aspects the [religious - ar] sectarian movement in Russia represents one of the democratic trends in Russia, the second Congress calls the attention of all party members to the necessity of working among members of the sects so as to bring them under Social Democratic influence.[[17](#)]

To achieve this, cadre from the RSDLP were assigned and a journal aimed exclusively at the religious sects was started. This paradoxical behavior will of course puzzle latter-day “Leninists,” much as do Lenin’s arguments for the right of self-determination as the only way of achieving the eventual abolition of national borders and differences.

This division will continue to exist in the North American Left. Those who cannot see that support for the democratic rights of gay people is the starting point of any analysis - though not the determinant of strategic or tactical priorities - will continue to remain behind.

The positions which begin with the assumption that there must be support for full democratic rights are varied, but they can be categorized roughly as follows:

1. The gay rights movement must be supported the same as any struggle for democratic rights. At this point in time it is a mass movement and therefore an opportune place for socialists and communists to be, both in attempting to raise the issue among the working class and also to draw gay people into the general class struggle.

2. The gay rights movement and gay liberation movement are not only part of a mass movement for democratic rights but are also a challenge to male supremacy, particularly from the lesbian movement. As ally to or part of the women's movement, which is "the strongest progressive force" in the U.S. today, they play a strategically important role in the socialist movement.[[18](#)]

3. "Historically, leading sectors of the lesbian and gay movements have acted as a strong anti-imperialist force... Only [support by the white Left for lesbian and gay movements] can really push forward an anti-imperialist movement within the white working class."[[19](#)]

4. Gay liberation is by nature revolutionary. The division into sexual and sex roles was the precursor and basis for later hierarchical divisions such as those of race and class. The smashing of homo-sexism and sexism would both initiate and require the overturning of the economic and political system.

As will be shown, none of these positions is altogether without merit, but neither is any of them useful for an approach to revolution in the U.S. or elsewhere.

The last of the positions. "Gay liberation is by nature revolutionary," is not held by any serious Left grouping, but it can be said to inform or underlie many analyses. For this reason it deserves examination. In the absence of a critical Marxism and in reaction to the prevalent vulgar and economist Marxism, a new creation arose during the late 1950s and early 1960s - though its roots lie far further back in history. The "most oppressed" (the "wretched of the earth") were to be viewed as the most revolutionary. Whether this substitution was sophisticated, as with Marcuse and Fanon, or primitive, as it was generally interpreted, it implicitly and explicitly shaped strategies which championed various oppressed groupings as *the* vanguard. Which grouping

was accord-ed this honor usually depended on which was most in motion at the time - youth, students, women, lumpen or gays.

As a reaction to economistic Marxism such a negation was inevi-table, but the specific situation of gays shows how useless such analy-ses are for the purpose of revolu-tionary strategy. The oppression of social groupings can be measured in such things as suicide, alcoholism, infant mortality and drug addiction rates which can be expressed sta-tistically. However, this method is useless to determine the “degree” of oppression of gays simply be-cause it could be done only in re-spect to those who are out of the closet, while those who are not openly gay or who do not even admit their homosexuality to them-selves would be hidden from any survey. This is also a form of op-pression; indeed, it is *the* oppres-sion that all gay people face in this society. So any survey is skewed in much the same way that unem-ployment surveys are skewed, since they do not take into account those who have given up looking for work.

The oppression of gays thus be-comes a matter of psychological rather than social investigation - and useless for any mapping of a course of action.

The mainstay of the last tenet, “gay liberation is inherently revolu-tionary,” is then not its insistence on gays as most oppressed - a purely subjective argument - but rather its view that the divisions of sex roles and sexuality are the un-derpinnings of and weakest links in capitalist society. In this respect the last position is linked with the second and third in their respective views of the struggle against sex roles (the women’s movement, fem-inism) being either the current main component of the “struggle for so-cialism” in the U.S. or the touch-stone of the anti-imperialist struggle in the U.S.

Both positions have been an-swered at length, the second by Beth

Henson in her article, “Social-ist Feminism and Socialist Revolution,” and the third by Carole Tra-vis in “White Women and Revolutionary Strategy .”[\[20\]](#)] Their arguments will not be repeated here.

Other points should be raised regarding both arguments, however. Nowhere is it ever pointed out by those who claim the leading role for women - or gays - exactly how women as *women* or gay people as *gays* have the potential for not only dismantling and destroying the existing social relations but also creating the new society that must follow. A profound confusion reigns whenever class analysis is shelved altogether.

Further, though it is undeniably correct that the oppression of women pre-dates capitalism as does the suppression of homosexual behavior, this factor - length of oppression - has no bearing on the question of “revolutionary potential.” The oppression of Black people as *Blacks* has existed in the U.S. only since the mid-1600s, yet who would argue that their relatively “short-lived” struggle for equality and land has changed the shape of world history less than that of gay people? We will return to this point.

There is a further basic error in all the arguments which cite the gay movement as a leading force in the current political arena and then proceed to point to it as a model for social change. The gay movement is not in any sense monolithic or unitary, not merely in its political goals and methods but also in its class and national composition. Those who attempt to promote uncritically the gay movement as a lodestone for social change should look to San Francisco, the second largest, if not largest gay ghetto. In the gay community there, a generally more politically progressive atmosphere exists, but not one strikingly different from the surrounding Bay Area communities. Organizers for the coalition against the Briggs Amendment stated that the gay community is

“traditionally apolitical” but that this changed in the battle against Briggs.[21] Yet the existing class and national differences remain. The formation of such groupings as the Third World Gay Caucus, Gay Latino Alliance, Black Gay Caucus and Gay American Indians leads to the conclusion that “shared oppression” on one level does not lead to any automatic overcoming of oppressiveness on other levels. It is precisely because of the racism of other gays - no more or no less than the society surrounding them - that groupings have formed based on resistance to national oppression.[22] [j]

There is a more fundamental division within the gay movement that is rarely examined by those who wish to see it as a leading force. There is no *single* movement of gay males and lesbians. At best there is a coalition of these two forces, and sometimes even that is non-existent.

This division cannot be overlooked or said to be the result of media sexism, police agents, or society-at-large (a tautological argument in every case). The more astute observers and participants of the gay movement have recently pointed out what has been true from the start: lesbians and gay males have existed generally in separate organizations since before Stonewall. [24] This is not so much a matter of a conscious political disagreement on tactics or strategy, as would lead to several different *mixed* organizations, as it is rooted in more fundamental differences.

These differences are of such magnitude as to suggest there are two distinct but interconnected movements, one of lesbian women and one of gay men. They stem partially from the presence within the lesbian movement of three different groupings: those women who realized that they were lesbians and came out before the onset of the women’s movement; those who came out directly as a result of the women’s movement and the gay liberation movement (i.e., by virtue of the support from those, it was possible to be open

about a sexual-ity that was already known to the individual, though consciously hid-den); and those women whose po-litical ideology led them to *define* themselves as lesbians. These latter two groupings, by far the largest part of the active lesbian organiza-tions, are not distinct altogether. The recognition of the distinction existed in the discussion that oc-curred in lesbian papers over “realesbian/politicalesbian, old gay/new gay” and the debate that arose over lesbian separatism as an ap-proach to end *male supremacy*. No such debates occurred in any gay male papers, nor was there the phe-nomenon of masses of males be-coming gay as a part of the struggle against male supremacy.

The different concerns of les-bians and gay males is also reflected in their sharply contrasting life-styles. A significant percentage of gay males can count hundreds of sexual partners during their lives, while most lesbians number less than ten (which is not significantly different from heterosexual wom-en). [25]

There is a reason for this also. Assata Shakur, writing from prison, said:

Most of the women at Riker’s Is-land have no idea what feminism is, let alone lesbianism. Feminism, the women’s movement and the gay liberation movement are worlds away from the women at Riker’s...

Here the word lesbian seldom, if ever is mentioned. Most, if not all, of the homosexual relationships here involve role playing. The ma-jority of the relationships are either asexual or semi-sexual. The absence of sexual consummation is only partially explained by prison prohibition against any kind of sexual behavior. Basically the women are not looking for sex. They are look-ing for love, for concern and com-panionship. For relief from the overwhelming sense of isolation and solitude that pervades each of us.[26]

Thus, though there are mainly gay male organizations committed to feminist perspectives (*The Body Politic*, for example) and organizations of lesbians who see their main struggle as against heterosexual oppression, in the main there are two relatively distinct groupings which intersect at some crucial points. When the demand to end police entrapment is juxtaposed with the struggle for the rights of gay parents to child custody, the distinction is most obvious. One affects gay males almost exclusively; the other is a threat to lesbian mothers *and* to any single woman parent. The demands of the lesbian movement have been consistent with those of single women - whether they are celibate, lesbian, or heterosexual. They are those who, in Carol Hanisch's words, "(do) not have or acknowledge a personal and legal master." [27] These demands are without a doubt attacks on the institutions of male supremacy. The same cannot be said for the movement, goals and organizations of gay males at every point. [k]

IV

Herr Proudhon does not know that all history is but the continuous transformation of human nature.

— Marx, *The German Ideology*

Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of hand, nail and tooth.

— Marx, *Grundrisse*

...considering the physiology of sexual response and the mammalian backgrounds of human behavior it is not so difficult to explain why a human being does a particular thing sexually. It is

more difficult to explain why each and every individual is not involved in every type of sexual activity.

— Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*

One of the most persistent objections to the gay movement has been that it has brought sexuality, that which is seen as a private matter, into the public realm. This assertion, whether it drops from the lips of Ann Landers, otherwise “supportive” liberals, or even “radical” groups, is spurious at best, sanctimonious elsetimes. [[29](#)]

What was and is commonplace between individuals of the opposite sex is met with fines or fisticuffs when individuals of the same sex do it. The simple act of holding hands turns no heads when a woman and a man do it in the U.S. Two women may pass unnoticed. Two men walking down a public street (outside a gay ghetto) holding hands are inviting not merely disapproval but physical attack. [[1](#)]

The strength of the gay movement after Stonewall exists because of its break in the accumulated reluctance of gays to make that *aspect* of their lives an issue for public debate. However, credit should go where it is due. Long before the gay movement’s recent resurrection, feminists and female Marxists were pointing out that the public display of affection and familial togetherness usually hid a private enslavement. Since, as Samir Amin has pointed out, the prevalence of pornography has succeeded in turning the orgasm into a commodity, one function of the public display of sexuality - whether gay or straight - is to obscure enslavement whose roots lie elsewhere. [[30](#)] [[m](#)]

This dominant trend, which can only rightfully be called decadence, is an inevitable outcome of the struggles of women and gays, despite their struggling being directed explicitly *against* this

- inevitable, since the dues collected for allowing public assertion of sexuality by an individual is the degradation of the individual into merely her or his sexuality. One of the byproducts of the gay movement, for example, has been the phenomenon of men as well as women becoming the objects of the sexual slurs, innuendoes, jokes and harassment from other men that are an increasing mainstay of U.S. workers' conversation during lulls in the class struggle.

The changes that have accompanied the movements of women and gays have called into question what are among the most commonly held understandings of human nature - those of sexuality and sex roles. The early activists of the gay liberation movement attacked psychiatry on its most fortified ground when they responded to psychiatrists' traditional question, "What causes homosexuality?" with another question: "What causes heterosexuality?"

Both questions are necessary. If there is to be an assessment of the struggle against gay oppression then it is necessary to do what Marxists have usually avoided, that is, say a few things about sexuality. This is not to imply that this has not been done, only that it has been avoided.

Lenin's admonitions to Clara Zetkin about those who seek to "justify one's own abnormal or excessive sex life... and to plead for tolerance towards oneself" have surely been used to stifle some thought and research.[[31](#)] The tangential paths of Wilhelm Reich and Alexandra Kollontai may have given cause for hesitancy in others.

Or it may stem from a belief that such matters should not be looked at too closely for fear that reason and science will drive out passion. Or that the historicizing (for that is what it is) of sexuality will only lead to moral relativism and depravity.

The hesitancy may even have come from elsewhere, since even an otherwise perceptive writer, Char-nie Guettel, says, “(A) more de-veloped Marxist psychology is need-ed to analyze sexuality (and) social-ization... but this will require scientific and medical advances of a kind not yet available.”[[32](#)]

None of these reasons are valid.

Lenin’s criticisms of the women of the KPD were made to Zetkin because they were not dealing with “questions of sex and marriage... from the standpoint of mature, vital historical materialism,” and “(b)ecause sex and marriage prob-lems are not treated as *only part* of the *main* social problem.” [em-phasis added] For Lenin in 1920, when he saw both the potentiality and necessity of revolution in West-ern Europe, “all thoughts of Com-munist women, of working women, should be centered on the prole-tarian revolution... For the Ger-man proletariat, the problem of the Soviets, of the Versailles Treaty and its impact on the lives of women... and many other things remain the order of the day.”[[33](#)] While he can be faulted for mis-estimating the potential for a successful revo-lution, it is clear that his single-mindedness stemmed from a strate-gic, not moral, outlook.

Kollontai and Reich’s later devia-tions, while worthy of study, are no more off-course than those of, say, Lunacharsky or Koestler. They cannot be credited solely to their interest in and writings on sexuality nor separated from the degenera-tion in the Bolshevik and German parties at the time.

Those who worry about the loss of passion that might result from closer investigation would do well to avoid the study of nutrition, bio-chemistry, physiology and anatomy lest they dull the taste of food and obstruct their digestion. And it is difficult to imagine how more skepticism and depravity than currently exist could be

created; they are in-herent in this epoch.

Humanity poses only those ques-tions which it is ready to answer. If the areas of sexuality and sociali-zation are left untouched by Marx-ists then the entire field is left to the sociobiologists, whether they be Edward O. Wilson and his “selfish genes” or those feminists who hold the theory of “inherent male vio-lence,” Freudians, Reichians, or the empiricists such as Masters and Johnson.[[34](#)]

Furthermore, the understanding of the gay movement often hinges on this question of sexuality - cor-rectly or incorrectly. Note the defi-nitions from the following writers:

Charlotte Bunch says, “(Lesbian-ism is) women’s ties to women; (heterosexuality is) women’s ties to men.” [[35](#)]

According to Bob McCubbin, “(Homosexuality is) the sexual and/or amorous attraction of peo-ple of the same sex. It may or may not include overt sexual acts and the persons involved may or may not also be attracted to members of the opposite sex.” [[36](#)]

Carl Wittman wrote, “Homosex-uality is the capacity to love some-one of the same sex.” [[37](#)]

The distance between these defi-nitions and the assessments which would follow from each should be apparent. As has been noted, the first would subsume all the strengths of the women’s move-ment under the banner of lesbian-ism while simultaneously dismissing those “ties to men,” whether of economic necessity, as is the case for all women in the working class, or of political choice, as being “het-erosexuality.” This explains every-thing and nothing.

McCubbin’s definition, if we ac-cept Kinsey’s statistics on homo-sexual behavior and fantasies, would include the majority of

the U.S. population as being homo-sexual.

Wittman's usage takes the question beyond the boundaries of political phenomena altogether. It becomes an entirely subjective matter - "Do you love this person?" - with no means, or need, to draw any practical conclusions from the answer.

These quotations were not singled out to ridicule the authors, who have all made valuable observations elsewhere in their writing, but to show some of the representative confusion of terminology and understanding on the matter. They also should suffice to show the results of avoiding a separation of the political aspects and the psycho-social aspects of the question in order to study it.

Frederick Engels wrote, "The producers relate their different kinds of labor to one another as general human labor by relating their products to one another as *commodities* - they cannot accomplish it without this mediation of things. The relation of *persons* thus *appears* as the relations of *things*." [[38](#)]

There are those who see just the "thing." This perspective has taken many different forms. One continually recurring variety is that of biological determinism, where the growth of the disciplines of genetics, endocrinology, and the like has given new life to old dogma. There are those who seek like Diogenes for the specific gene pattern or the "inadequate" hormonal level that will "prove" to be the "cause" of homosexuality. That scientific workers have found no evidence - or at least nothing that repeats in a second experiment - leave them undaunted. Their search will continue, at least as long as it is funded. [[n](#)]

Only slightly removed from the biological determinists are their counterparts in psychiatry, whether Freudian, neo-Freudian, or neo--Reichian. [[o](#)] Their Eurocentric, ahistorical outlook leads them to such confusion as is shown in the listing of dozens of

“causes” of homosexuality given in Kinsey. The re-classification of homosexuality from a “mental disorder” to a “sexual-orientation disturbance” by the American Psychiatric Association came about only as a result of the continuing protests by militant gays, not any breakthroughs in the fields of medicine or science. Despite this reversal, as a result of their previous stance the popular presumption continues to be that homosexuality occurs as a result of “mistakes” made during the childhood and adolescent years. Even studies showing that lesbians and gay males who have accepted their sexuality are happier and better-adjusted than their heterosexual counterparts will not affect this “common sense” notion. [43]

Those who derive their understanding of human sexuality (or human society) from its “natural-ness” are also to be disillusioned. Gay activists in the early 1970’s cited the observations of Ford and Beach and Kinsey, who observed “homosexual behavior” in animals ranging from porcupines to elephants. But these comparisons and the analogies drawn from them can be said to lose much of their strength and validity when the differences between humans and all other mammals, even primates, are examined.[p]

Humans began their genetic divergence from other primates from two to ten million years ago. This means that 100,000 to 500,000 generations have existed in which “human” characteristics have been created. For example, there are no rutting cycles in humans. While there is a fifteen percent rise in conceptions during the springtime in England, Wales, and Bavaria, the opposite is true in the United States and New Zealand. In Puerto Rico the birth period pattern shifted from one similar to the European model to one similar to that of the U.S. in the twenty years following 1941. Imperialism, not “nature,” has become the determinant of when babies are born. [44]

Another difference is that both females and males are capable of having orgasms. Of greater importance for understanding human sexuality as differentiated from that of other mammals is that in humans, sexual desire and functional ability are able to continue unimpaired after surgical castration of the ovaries or testes - if such castration occurs after puberty. In every lower mammalian species, the behavior that is classified as "sexual" ceases altogether after castration. [45]

Thus we are faced with Kinsey's question.

Sexual reproduction of humans is inseparable from social production by humans. If there were no births, there would shortly be no social production; if there were no social production, there would even sooner be no births. Each stage of society, each mode of production, must then include the process of sexual reproduction. Yet each threatens the other; the relative overproduction of children taxes the limits of social production as it exists now; the end-products of the current mode of production - war, famine, pandemic environmental pollution - threaten to end the process of sexual reproduction.

Humans engage in a variety of sexual activity, much as humans eat a greatly varying diet. The tube-feeding of a comatose white North American male is both similar to and distinct from the boiled rice diet of an Indochinese peasant woman. Both spring from necessity, yet the means by which that necessity is met are vastly different. The paid sex of a gay male hustler is both similar to and distinct from the rhythmically regulated sex life of a religiously Catholic woman. This stems from the unity and distinctiveness of that which is necessary for procreation - ovulation, ejaculation and fertilization - and the physical manifestations that are identified with sexuality. This is most clearly evident in women, where every ovulation is not accompanied by orgasm, nor every orgasm by ovulation (or fertilization). [q]

In men the separation of the two processes is not immediately self-evident. This is of some importance, as it has been said that the scientific and technological advances of the last quarter-century have provided the basis for the separation of sexuality and procreation. [46] According to this notion, commonly available contraceptive measures such as the IUD, birth-control pills, diaphragms, and condoms provide a basis for separation and prevention, while artificial in-semination provides a means for separation and conception.

This explanation, which ignores the imperialistic use of contraceptive and procreative “advances” to control or destroy Third World peoples, also ignores how ideology functioned to obscure the already-existing distinctiveness of sexuality and procreation. [47] The knowledge of this existed before the birth of Christianity; only a determined class struggle and defeat concealed it from history, as will be seen.

Meanwhile, as Marx remarked, history has progressed by its bad side. [r] One of the results of the imperialist war conducted against the Indochinese peoples by the United States was a much higher number and percentage of paraplegics and quadriplegics surviving - U.S. survivors, to be sure - what would have been certain death in all previous wars. The Veterans Administration hospitals were filled with these survivors, whose first desire was to resume a “normal life,” including, if possible, a life with a marriage and family.

What was taught to these survivors, just as they were taught to discover if their extremities were being burned by the smell of charred flesh, was that they could enjoy a relatively normal life, even conceive children, but they would be unable to experience orgasm as the result of the severing of the necessary nervous connections. In other words they could have an erection - though

not know it - and ejaculate - though not know it - since the nervous systems necessary for this are distinct from those that create the possibility and register the occurrence of an orgasm. The process of procreation could continue; their sexual experience was markedly different. As Masters and Johnson note, the ejaculation can be an act of pure reflex, much like a knee reacting to a hammer strike. As Kinsey notes at length, there is no longer any reason to equate ejaculation with orgasm.[[50](#)]

It is on the basis of these observations and those following that these suppositions can be made: human female and male sexuality originates from the basis of involuntary processes which insured procreation and thus survival of the species, but during the millions of years of human biological *and* social change - including class struggle - these processes became entirely learned behavior. Therefore the strength and direction of an individual human's sexuality is acquired after birth. Thus heterosexuality in humans is not "natural." Nor is homosexuality. Both these categories are the framework used to describe *and* control human sexual behavior at this point in history. [[s](#)]

To prove these assertions by what would be considered scientific methods would require a series of experiments that would be considered unethical and repugnant even by those scientists who do not hesitate to test new surgical practices and medications on entire populations of Third World peoples.

There is no need for such experiments. A vast amount of data and conclusions from disparate sources supports the assertions.

I. The few recorded and substantiated cases of feral children ("wolf children") and children raised in isolation all presented some common characteristics. Two always noted upon discovery are initial muteness and difficulty in standing erect. But another distinguishing feature, one which could only become apparent

with the onset of puberty, was recorded as the authors' "surprise at their subjects' apparent lack of interest in sex." One of the more famous cases of childhood isolation, Kaspar Hauser, "grew to accept the idea of marriage and the presence in the house of a female companion, but he could conceive of such a person only as a housekeeper and the idea of love between man and woman never entered his head." [[51](#)]

In a more controlled setting, Har-low's work with monkeys raised in isolation was intended to test hypotheses about mother-child relationships. When monkeys were separated from their mothers at birth and raised alone, with only mannequin mothers for feeding purposes, they developed into distinctly different, asocial, almost autistic creatures. One notable aspect of this was their inability to copulate. None of the surrogate-raised males or females was ever able to effect mating, even with experienced partners. [[52](#)]

II. The extensive cross-cultural research of Ford and Beach dis-assembled the most carefully constructed notions of homosexual behavior as being an aberration of either "primitive" societies, societies in decay, or "advanced" societies. In fact, such behavior occurs in every society, though with vastly varying frequency. [[53](#)]

However, a more germane conclusion from their work is that with the progressive development of the relative size of the cerebral cortex (in humans to ninety per-cent of the brain mass) and the lengthening of neoteny, the amount of specific physiological control (reflex or "instinctual") over sexual behavior decreases while the influence of learned behavior increases.

III. The pioneering work of Kinsey and his associates, which has been recently extended by the publication of *Homosexualities*, led them to reject all other explanations of homosexual behavior thusly:

There is no need of hypothesizing peculiar hormonal factors that make certain individuals especially liable to engage in homosexual activity, and we know of no data which prove the existence of such hormonal factors. There are no sufficient data to show that specific hereditary factors are involved. Theories of childhood attachments to one or the other parent, theories of fixation at some infantile level of sexual development, interpretations of homosexuality as neurotic or psychopathic behavior or moral degeneracy, and other philosophic interpretations are not supported by scientific research, and are contrary to the specific data on our series of female and male histories. The data indicate that the factors leading to homosexual behavior are (1) the basic physiological capacity of every mammal to respond to any sufficient stimulus; (2) the accident which leads an individual into his or her first sexual experience with a person of the same sex; (3) the conditioning effects of such an experience; and (4) the indirect but powerful conditioning which the opinions of other persons and the social codes may have on an individual's decision to accept or reject this type of sexual contact. [54]

IV. The studies of the past twenty years by Stoller on transexuality, and Money, Ehrhardt, and the Hampsons on physical hermaphroditism and sex-reassigned individuals have led to a new examination of the question of how gender-role (self-identification as female or male) is acquired. The respective researchers draw varying conclusions, indeed opposing conclusions, but a great weight of the evidence supports their position that gender-role, something even more basic than choice of sexual object, is *entirely* learned.[55]

V. Finally, the work of Masters and Johnson in *treatment* of sexual dysfunction is based on the premise that human sexuality is learned. While they explicitly reject the possibility of learning a different sexual orientation [t] their method involves the re-

training or education of individuals in a different conception of sexuality. No other course of treatment has approached the “success rate” for curing sexual “inadequacy” that they have achieved.[[u](#)] [[56](#)]

How then does one explain the creation of gay and lesbian sexual-ity by a society that attempts to suppress by laws or violence the existence of such behavior?

In the same manner that one ex-plains the creation of the proletar-iat or revolutionary intelligentsia. The combining of labor by capital-ists in order more efficiently to produce surplus capital also pro-duces a collective force which may topple its creators. The mainte-nance and “improvement” of capi-tal and capitalist social relation-ships requires the existence of an advanced educational system; the attempt at understanding necessar-ily produces those who critique and then some who move to attack the system.

The complete suppression of sex-uality in society is an impossible proposition from a social stand-point; it would mean the extinction of the community or species. The creating and channeling of individ-ual sexuality is then largely the function of the particular form of the family during each mode of production.[[v](#)] Thus a particular set of sexual relationships and concep-tion of those would be prevalent during different modes of produc-tion, contingent on the class relations and level of class struggle.

The development and substantia-tion of this proposition would re-quire much effort, both in its ap-plication to pre-capitalist forma-tions and capitalism. An outline of such would appear like this:

Prior to the existence of a tribute--paying (Asiatic) mode of produc-tion, equality in sexuality prevailed, as did equality of

women when relations with nature, not social relations, predominated. The relics of such a conception survive only in Chinese literature (which is the oldest written historical record) as the “Tao of Communion.” A more mystified and debased form exists in India as Tantric art and ritual. Forced suppression of almost all the extant writings on the “Tao of Communion” occurred in China as the social position of women was devalued. This was almost completed with the destruction of much Chinese literature and culture during the Mongolian reign of eighty-eight years during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. [60]

During the transition to private property ownership, the strict familial relationships necessary for inheritance of property became established. The *ideological* unification of sexuality and reproduction was necessitated and upheld in order to maintain those property relationships.

In Europe this could be seen during the transition to feudalism when the Roman Catholic church moved to consolidate the ideology of Christianity by forcefully narrowing the range of socially permissible sexuality. Concurrent with the encirclement of common land and the political subjugation of the former free-living peoples was the outlawing - by penalty of death and confiscation of property - of the pagan religions and heretical cults and their practices of sexual expression, including homosexual behavior. [61]

This transitional period with the increasing dominance of social and historically created elements undoubtedly saw the creation of the social category of “homosexual,” as distinct from what could be called homosexual behavior. The slang terms for exclusively homosexual behavior stem from this period. [62] As a political weapon, this categorization was undoubtedly quite useful, since disproving the charge of indulging in homosexual behavior would be as difficult as proving that one doesn’t practice witchcraft.

The developing of capitalism and the struggles of women during the bourgeois revolutions laid the basis for furthering the status of women and, at least in Europe, removed legal restrictions against homosexuality with the Code Napoleon while continuing to reproduce the social categories of “heterosexual” and “homosexual.” The provincial attitudes and actions of rural areas and small towns forced a continual migration of gay people to more metropolitan areas; a ghettoization process has occurred there. The existence of a geographically distinct gay ghetto in almost every large city in the U.S. is the result of this, and a precondition for the existence of the mass gay movement. The prevalent forms and conceptions of sexuality existing in countries such as the U.S.S.R. and U.S. today can only be understood in relation to the prevailing mode of production and levels of class struggle. For example, it is not too difficult to imagine that in a country where the working class has been systematically suppressed for over fifty years and where computers, pre-adolescent scholastic and athletic tracking programs and lifetime sinecures are used to produce chess and sports champions, sexual encounters are likely to be remarkably akin to those in *1984*. Every other area of life has been invaded by the state, why not this one?

In the U.S. the study of sexuality as an *independent* discipline has taken a quantitative leap and qualitative turn in the period since World War II. The numbers of studies and literature on the subject have increased even as humans appear increasingly as numbers or numerical relations. The rampantly decadent sexual atmosphere, whether among heterosexuals or gays, which has come into existence in that time is evinced in the very words - or numbers - used to describe the relationships. The frustrations of a class which has suffered a series of non-decisive defeats since 1968 are being acted out in individual attempts at salvation, whether through praying, fucking, under-water Stylitism, drinking, or

drugs.

As Engels observed:

It is a curious fact that with every great revolutionary movement the question of “free love” comes into the foreground. With one set of people as a revolutionary progress, as a shaking off of old traditional fetters, no longer necessary; with others as a welcome doctrine, comfortably covering all sorts of free and easy practices between man and woman.[[63](#)]

This “curious fact” stems from the upsetting or calling into question of the political and economic relations between women and men during class struggle. In the last instance of an (almost) great revolutionary movement, the relations between women and men, women and women, and men and men were all called into question. But the ability of capital to revolutionize and re-consolidate itself has meant that those questions have only been partially answered - and cannot be outside of another revolutionary upsurge.

Thus, the creation, direction, and restriction of individual sexuality has been one of the functions of the nuclear family. But as the family is “itself destroyed in theory and practice” (Marx’s original version in the *Theses on Feuerbach*), we must expect the patterns of formation of sexuality to change also.[[64](#)] What “human” sexuality will be cannot be known; we have yet to create it. That is not, by any distorted imagination, the primary task of either movements or individuals. It is not even possible, or only as possible as the realization of unalienated labor - in the event of revolutionary upsurge. Until then we shall have to be content with that which arises in the course of conscious anti-imperialist struggle. [[w](#)]

However,

(It is also worth saying that the passage from necessity to freedom takes place through the society of men and not through nature (al-though it may have effects on our intuition of nature, on scientific opinions, etc.). One can go so far as to affirm that, whereas the en-tire system of philosophy of praxis [Marxism] may fall away in a uni-fied world, many idealist concep-tions, or at least certain aspects of them which are utopian during the reign of necessity, could become “truth” after the passage.[[65](#)]

At that time, one’s sexuality, if the separation from other aspects of societal life still remains, will be as important as which end one uses to crack the shell of a soft-boiled egg.

V

History is filled with irony, per-haps more so recently than before. The CIA diligently studies Marx-ism, while trade-unionists just as doggedly learn mass media tech-niques. The New Right organizes women - against abortion, the ERA, and busing - while the Left applauds China’s entry into inter-national politics - at the price of its internationalism. Perhaps the greatest irony is that it is the New Right which has con-sciously or unconsciously made the best use of Lenin’s conception of attacking at the weakest point. What *appears* to be the most vul-nerable ideological point of the women’s movement is the issue of lesbianism; for progressive move-ments it *seems* to be the issue of homosexuality. *The* most vulner-able ideological point of the gay movement is the issue of the mo-lesting of children by gays, especial-ly male children by male adults. While there is no basis in fact for this, since well over ninety percent of all rapes and seductions of chil-dren are of female children by adult (presumably heterosexual) males, it is precisely here that the most successful assaults against gay rights are being directed.[[66](#)] The campaign against the gay rights or-dinance in Dade County was orga-nized successfully around the

slo-gan “Save Our Children”; Amend-ment number 6, the Briggs Amend-ment, in California was specifically directed against gay schoolteachers; the anti-gay campaigns in Boston and Toronto, both centers of the gay movement, were spearheaded by trials involving alleged gay child--rapists/murderers and alleged gay child procurers. Similar anti-gay campaigns under the guise of stop-ping the sexual exploitation of chil-dren are occurring in Great Britain and France. The trial of John Gacy in Chicago will doubtless be used for further outpourings of hypo-critical anti-gay claptrap on this matter. While no revolutionary would condone the sexual abuse or ex-ploitation of children - or adults - it should be obvious that this is not the motivation behind the attention given these cases and campaigns. The clamor raised by the media is not so much the defense of the rights of children or freedom from sexual abuse as it is the defense of the existing system. For example, when three-year-old Eric Christgen, the white son of a prominent St. Joseph, Missouri, businessman, was abducted, sexually assaulted, and murdered, the newspaper coverage of this event in Kansas City rated more line-space than the abduction, rape and murder of *nine* Kansas City Black women ranging in age from their teens to mid-forties. One need not discuss the issue of rela-tive oppression; they are all dead. What should be obvious is that white supremacy, male supremacy, and class distinction dictated the “truth” that appeared in the media. John Gerassi in *The Boys of Boise* examined how a 1955 cam-paign in Boise, Idaho, against al-leged seduction of teenage boys (many of whom were also even-tually prosecuted and persecuted) by gay male adults was but a cover for the efforts of a group of Boise lawyers and businessmen to de-throne the reformist city adminis-tration and in the process purge one of the group’s own members who was gay. The purge attempt failed, but the essential aim of the group - to choose, control and win on issues that obscured the underlying political struggle in the town - remains the perspective of the New Right today.[[67](#)] Any successful response to the well-coordinated *international* at-tack against gays will in turn have an

approach, one which would single out the points which must be defeated within a scientific/intellectual framework (such as the notion that homosexuality is a “sickness”), an estimate of which aspects of an issue must be stressed (as with the threat of firing to *all* teachers in California if the Briggs Amendment had passed), and decisions as to which organizations and sections of the population will be gained as allies. These are the elementary and necessary tasks of any *reform movement*. A traditional role for Marxists within such movements has been the first task, defeating bourgeois intellectuals and intellectual systems on their own terms and at their strongest points. The record of the North American Left in relation to the gay movement on this point has been so dismal that there should be little amazement that the Left has been castigated for making “no theoretical contributions to the (gay) movement,” but having entered in order to “fish for recruits.”[[x](#)] This characterization could easily fit any number of North American Left groupings. The pages of the *Militant*, for example, frequently contain righteous attacks on the Communist Party, USA, for its opportunism on the question of gay rights. But nowhere is there a theoretical statement of the Socialist Workers Party reviewing its own past stance, documenting its current understanding of the gay movement’s significance, or any attempt to point out its limitations, other than standard advice by them not to rely on the Democratic Party. Little wonder that SWP cadre still seem uneasy when they meet the gay movement in the flesh.[[70](#)] The New American Movement, while continuing to rank support for gay rights as one of its national priorities, allows publication of such mass propaganda as “After Dade County: Turning Defeat into Victory.”[[71](#)] This pamphlet by Blazing Star NAM calls for “letters to your elected representatives,” boycotts and petition-signing - all indistinguishable from what any intelligent reformist gay organization would be doing. While such activities are the mainstay of reform struggles initially and the point from which revolutionaries may *begin*, they cannot end there. As Rosa Luxemburg said:

(W)hoever opts for the path of legal reform, *in place of* and in contradiction to the conquest of political power, actually chooses not a calmer and slower road to the *same* aim but a *different* aim altogether.[[72](#)]

As much in error is the pam-phet's call for forming "coalitions with other groups - women's, black, Latino, labor - to work together for everyone's rights," with-out presenting an outline of the principles on which such coalitions could form without being a mere potpourri of self-interest.[[73](#)]

NAM may be "Marxist" and "socialist-feminist" but its position and analysis - or lack of analysis - on the gay movement is not revolu-tionary.

The rest of the North American Left has atoned for the consistent sins of the CPUSA in three ways: some have chosen withdrawal from reality, as with the various Maoist and Stalinist groups such as the Communist Party (Marxist-Lenin-ist), the previously mentioned RCP, the Communist Labor Party, and all those who wish no blemish on their "scientific" notions of the world. Many, such as the *Guardian* and Philadelphia Workers Organiz-ing Committee, run "supportive" articles or columns but shy away from further analysis. Others have chosen the path indicated earlier: placing the issue of gay rights "at the top of the agenda," whether they see it as a revolutionary strug-gle, a struggle against patriarchy, against the family, against sexism, against imperialism, or a struggle for democratic rights.

The confusion about what cate-gory the gay movement belongs in will continue as long as the failure to separate the aspects of the move-ment persists. If, for example, Bay Area Gay Liberation leads a Coors boycott, that doesn't make the gay movement a workers' movement. It does indicate a conscious attempt by a specific organization to link a national struggle (by Mexicanos/

Chicanos at Coors), a workers' struggle (around the conditions of work there) and a democratic rights struggle (the invasion of workers' rights in the morals questions in the Coors employee screening program) with the campaign against the use of Coors' profits for financing of anti-gay efforts in the U.S.

If the former Lavender and Red Union led a sector of the Los Angeles gay community towards Marxism (or away) that does not make the gay movement either Marxist or revolutionary. If individuals or gay organizations take an anti-imperialist or anti-white supremacist position, this doesn't make "leading sectors of the lesbian and gay movement... a strong, anti-imperialist force." Such positions are *con-scious* acts and demonstrate no objective necessity on the part of the gay movement to act in an anti-imperialist or anti-white supremacist manner.

To the extent that the gay *male* movement is anti-sexist, anti-patri-archal and anti-family, it also is a *conscious* decision, not one dictated by the nature of the movement, as shown earlier. Indeed, for the categories of heterosexual and homosexual to disappear will require the withering away of the function of sex-role indoctrination within the family, but that struggle against the oppressive aspects of the family has always been led and will always arise from among women, who will undoubtedly accept principled allies from whatever quarter.

Implicit in all the attempts to fit the gay movement into various "more revolutionary" categories is the assumption that calling it a democratic rights movement or a reform struggle is somehow a defa-mation, a downplaying of its im-portance from the viewpoint of Marxism. Nothing could be less true. No one knows what will *spark* the next outburst of the class strug-gle. The overthrow of the Haile Selassie government in Ethiopia (a movement forward, regardless of one's assessment of the present re-gime) followed a traffic stoppage that occurred when a taxicab driver in Addis

Ababa parked his cab in the middle of the main thorough-fare to protest high gas prices. Two days later 100,000 demonstrated and four days later the government fell. The 1905 Russian Revolution was begun in earnest when Father Gapon led a peaceful march of 200,000 workers to the Winter Palace to petition the Tsar for such demands as freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and the press, and an eight-hour working day. The portrait of the Tsar and church icons that headed the march did not prevent the Cossacks from following orders and killing a thousand workers. The turning point in the Iranian revolution was the refusal of the Shah to heed the demands of democratic rights and economic reforms by the Iranian oil workers, who also marched under portraits of the Shah until they were fired upon.

Marxists support democratic rights struggles not as a matter of sentiment, moralistic well-meaning, or even the illusion that formal gaining of democratic rights is equivalent to a corresponding change in the working class's consciousness. After all, Holland has had no laws prohibiting homosexual behavior for more than a century .[74] Yet the oppression of gays and consciousness of the working class in regard to the oppression is not markedly different from that in the U.S.

Support and active participation occur because democratic rights struggles have the potential for exposing the true basis of oppression - not that of laws, but that of property relations. Such struggles are not important in and of themselves, but for the potential they have in contributing to the possibility of and showing the necessity of revolutionary change.

When such struggles attain a mass character, whether on their own or because of their initiation by revolutionaries, it is not a question for revolutionary organizations to vouchsafe abstract support but to intervene in such a way that they can aid the struggle materially, learn from the self-activity of the oppressed *and* critique the

limitations of the struggle. [y]

It is to the limitations of the gay movement that we must now turn, after explaining why such examination is necessary.

The strategy of a revolutionary organization cannot be the same as that of a mass organization or movement. The revolutionary organization must “point out to the movement its ultimate aim and its political tasks,” at each stage. This means that strategy for the revolutionary group is a plan and direction for a given *historical period*, not a single electoral campaign or political issue. It involves an assessment of which among many issues will clarify the necessary choices that must be made and an estimate of which sections of the population will be decisive in a struggle for political power of the working class internationally.

Thus the tasks of a revolutionary group and a reformist movement will sometimes seem at variance. Within the campaign against the Briggs Amendment, some differences can be noted. While those who intended to *win* the vote would have focused on the activities of the New Right and sought money and votes from the most likely sources, the white left-liberal wing of the Democratic Party, those who viewed the campaign from a revolutionary perspective would have proceeded differently. Such a view would have focused on how the Right has grown and prospered only because of the deep divisions in the U.S. working class and sought to use the electoral campaign to work among those sectors of the population where unity can be created and where unity would be decisive in the seizing of political power by the class. The campaign would not be waged *mainly* for votes (as Engels said, “as if defeat were not often more honourable than victory” [77]), but to aid the coalescing of a social bloc with revolutionary culture and ideology while at the same time pointing out and defeating (or at least neutralizing) counter-revolutionary aspects of the class’s consciousness, of which anti-gay sentiment is one. The task of the revolutionary

or-organization is then to convince this social bloc to aim its blows at the “most vulnerable point at which a decisive blow can be struck.”[78] The potential of any movement must be the role it can play in such an effort.

The survival of capitalism depends on the creation of a surplus product and the control of the appropriation of that surplus product. This requires a population sufficient to produce (a working class) and to protect (a *national* working class), which explains the interest of the bourgeoisie in the declining birth rates in capitalist countries and the success of sterilization programs in Third World nations. If the open existence of gay rights presents no threat to either of these functions, then there will be no longer any necessity for state intervention as previously occurred to restrict and channelize sexuality. [Z]

The process of withdrawal of *legal* restrictions on sexual behavior has occurred unevenly, to be sure, but can be seen to have accelerated in the post-World War II period in countries of Western Europe and the U.S. The unevenness of the process creates the terrain on which a mass movement for gay rights has developed and at the same time creates its foreclosure. That is, the passage of legislation, whether city by city, as is likely given the presence of visible gay populations only in large cities, or state by state, will then merely leave gays as another constituency or interest group to be organized into the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, which has much experience in such cooptation. This process is already well underway in San Francisco and New York City, even though revolutionary and Marxist elements in the gay movement oppose it by attempting to deepen and broaden their struggle. Their awareness is that this parliamentary approach will lead not to gay liberation but to freedom to be equally exploited.

The gay movement's existence *outside*, for the most part, of

struggles in the workplace and factory is another limitation that exists. If all gay people woke up lavender, as one long-time activist said, then the struggle would immediately change character. But as long as most gay people are passing, then the discrimination against them in hiring and other practices is on the basis of other factors and cannot be fought in a mass way, either by the gay movement alone or by seeking to enlist the rest of the working class behind the principle of "An injury to one is an injury to all." Corporate use of lie-detector tests and voice stress tests to enforce "employee morals" may force battles here, where the possibility of linking the struggles of gay workers to those of other workers would change the character of the movement from its present one. [aa]

These limitations, one can argue, exist in some form in every movement for social change. But, as was argued earlier, to ignore one's own weak points and not to strike decisively at those of the enemy is to insure defeat.

The question of striking decisively is always before us. The systematic oppression of gay people is due to the existence of capitalism and the reign of capitalist ideology among the masses of people. The ending of capitalism, or more correctly, the ending of this stage of capitalism, which is characterized by the division of the world into oppressor and oppressed nations, will only come about through the concentration of efforts at imperialism's most vulnerable point.

As has been developed elsewhere at greater length, Sojourner Truth Organization sees the movements for national liberation as being the motive force in the struggle against imperialism. For us as communists and revolutionaries in the main oppressor nation, this defines our task in the same way Lenin did: the winning of working class unity through solidarity with the struggles for self-determination and equality against U.S. imperialism. This then

means that the struggle against white supremacy and solidarity with the national struggles of Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican and Native peoples is not just seen as a social movement co-equal with all others, but the test by which we measure all others, as it is the passage to proletarian dictatorship.

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a One position paper of the RCP said that gays could be “anti-impe-rialist (but) cannot be communists,” therefore they could not join the RCP. It is just as well; gay anti-imperialists would feel as out of place in the RCP for their anti-imperialism as for their gay-ness.[[5](#)] [[return to text](#)]

b *People’s World*, June 18, 1977. Angela Davis came out publicly against the Briggs Amendment, along with Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, and Jerry Brown. However, most Party lead-ers attempt to hide behind the claim that this “is a private matter.” “Private mat-ters” that draw life sentences in the U.S. and five-year sentences in the USSR are not private enough. [[return to text](#)]

c This is not a claim that all or any one of these authors have been searched. Indexes, and more importantly, the searches of those seeking to discredit *or* validate the gay movement and their as-sessments of it by quotations alone were relied upon. [[return to](#)

[text](#)]

d The stultification of Marxist thought on this subject cannot be separated from the general paralysis in Marxist thought that existed until recently. For some discussion of this, see F. Clau-din's *The Communist Movement* or the introduction to S. Amin's *Unequal De-velopment*.

But why didn't Marx or Engels (or Lenin...) write about homosexuality at any length? The question is somewhat moot since there was no mass movement of gays in their lifetime. They did write about the struggle for sexual rights and about sexual liberation - especially in polemics against those who separated and elevated these above the class struggle. Not surprisingly, this arose in the U.S. section of the First International.[[9](#)]

Those who merely criticize Engels' conclusions, or attempt to make them synonymous with Marx's or Marxism are ignoring what both considered essential to understanding and changing society. If, by use of their method, not their conclusions, we cannot understand and change society, the blame cannot be laid at their tombs, any more than they - or Jesus Christ - can be held responsible for the slaughter of young children in Jonestown.
[[return to text](#)]

e The Nazi attitude towards homo-sexuality is also worth examining. Hitler knew that Roehm and Heines, leaders of the S.A., the left wing of the Nazis, were homosexuals; that, in fact, a number of S.A. leaders were homosexual. Despite his professed moral outrage to Speer about finding "two naked boys" during the Blood Purge of the S.A., Hitler had for years defended this behavior inside the Nazis as long as the accused were "fanatical fighter(s) for the movement." [[12](#)] The purge, or Night of the Long Knives, occurred only when Hitler was assured of enough political power to risk eliminat-ing those who had helped raise him

and the National Socialist Workers Party of Germany to their pinnacle. The male-supremacist ideology of the Nazis then took on its openly anti-gay character, but before that time homosexual behavior had been tolerated *inside* the party. [[return to text](#)]

f Two questions are expected here: why was there a reversal of positions by the communist parties in both Germany and the USSR? And this one - especially raised by those who are not Leninists - didn't Lenin have a puritanical, reaction-ary, even hypocritical attitude on sexual matters, one that paved the way for the reversals?

The first question, as will be illustrated in a later chapter, must be answered else-where, specifically in the debate on the development of capitalism in the USSR and the victory of imperialist economism in the Western workers' movement. See Noel Ignatin's *No Condescending Saviors* as a starting point.

As for Lenin, a re-reading of his later conversation with Clara Zetkin is worth-while, since this is usually cited as the source of the conclusion about Lenin's "puritanism." But it is difficult to imagine that Lenin was unaware of the new laws regarding "sexual matters," given his attention to every detail of the USSR's creation. To attempt to attribute the reversal of these to his personality is as useful as linking U.S. foreign policy to the state of Jimmy Carter's hemorrhoids. [[return to text](#)]

g The gay members of the original group were male. No similar connection with overtly Leftist politics existed in the lesbian groups that formed a few years later. [[return to text](#)]

h To argue that no members of the North American Left feel that gays are "the scum of the earth" is to ignore both the implications of the statements of the RCP and the existence of a significant sector of the working class which feels exactly that way. [[return to](#)

[text](#)]

i There is a third argument that has not been addressed. It is that fighting for a socialist revolution is the only task of Marxists. This is true, but it is also such a truism that the Progressive Labor Party, which thinks gay people are sick, and the Spartacist League, which doesn't, can both hold it without any difficulty. [[return to text](#)]

j The question of the relation of Third World movements and communities to homosexuality and the gay movement must be considered outside the scope of this article. Some comments can be made.

It is striking that most Third World gays in the U.S. identify themselves as members of their nation first, then as gays. The attitudes of their movements toward them has varied greatly from the emphatic support of Huey Newton in 1970 to purges in other groups. [[23](#)] Given the position of Third World gays it should be evident that they will be the initiators of the necessary debate among their peoples. However, patronizing statements such as one from the white gay male collective of the magazine *RFD*, lecturing *Akwesasne Notes* on the role of the berdaches in Native peoples' culture, will not aid this process. White North Americans seeking to "get back to the land," whether gay or straight, can only be viewed as small-scale imperialists by Native peoples struggling to get back their lands.

As for Third World movements outside the current U.S. borders, including Third World governments, the criticisms of the practices of these, while empirically true [e.g., Cuba does persecute and prosecute its gay populace], are generally idealist. That is, they begin with the assumption that the countries criticized are "social-ist" and therefore should not engage in such practices. The specific historical experience of the nations is rarely mentioned, e.g., Peking was a world center for the sale of young boys to

pederasts until the revolution; the strength of *machismo* among Cuban males is still a factor in Cuban political life, and the lack of a gay movement in the pre-revolutionary period is rarely mentioned as a factor.

If one is to mention and analyze the oppression of gays in Cuba or elsewhere, then one should also seek out the source of the oppression of women and workers there. The separation of the questions indicates a narrow focus; the raising of them by any other than those who have consistently supported national liberation struggles against U.S. imperialism is an act of great-nation chauvinism. [[return to text](#)]

k It is undoubtedly true that there were males who came out as gay in the course of their support for struggles against male supremacy, but no one can cite anything approaching a mass movement of males choosing to become gay in order not to oppress women. (Nor, as Carol Hanisch and some Redstockings suggest, was there a *conscious* choosing on the parts of masses of radical men to become gay in order to avoid struggling against male supremacy in their personal relationships. There are far too many easier routes of escape than that, fraught with all its attendant dangers.)

As for lesbianism as a political strategy, this is adequately debated elsewhere, especially in *Feminist Revolution*. [[28](#)] For any revolutionary male to argue against women choosing women as sexual partners as well as companions and house-mates would be merely another example of male supremacist behavior. The confusion by males in this society of sexuality and violence or domination is one reason why women have chosen women. The prevalent presentation of women's bodies as the *only* sexual objects is another reason why the ideological barrier against homosexuality is also weaker among women than men. [[return to text](#)]

l It should be remarked that in different cultures, different epochs, such an activity would be viewed as an act of friendship, not a proclamation of one's sexual preference. Such possibilities are not granted in a society, which, while no longer able to categorize all adults readily into "married" and "in-the-process-of-becoming-married," still maintains the presumption that close female/male relationships outside those imposed by work are somehow sexual in nature. [[return to text](#)]

m The current debate in the women's movement on how to attack pornography (or whether to attack it) has so far focused on how it is used to degrade women, its enormous profitability, and the question of "free speech." For Marxists, while those are aspects to be considered, the question must be how pornography degrades the class - not by "sapping its moral strength," but how the fetishization of women's body parts makes it difficult or impossible to view women as workers, revolutionaries, and all-sided humans. [[return to text](#)]

n The very resurrection in the early 1900's of the science of genetics after Mendel's initial discovery in the 1860's, and its subsequent fates in the USSR and the USA, show that ideology and the needs of capital, not any pure striving for knowledge, determine the direction of science.

Some researchers for the "cause" of homosexuality seem to have adopted the methods pioneered by Sir Cyril Burt, a British psychologist known for his innovative work in the field of IQ studies. Sir Burt unhesitatingly invented research scores, research assistants, and entire research *populations* when need arose. These were used to substantiate his theory that the "lower" classes had lower IQ scores as a result of heredity, not environment.

The major document in the so-called proof of the genetic origins of

homosex-uality, the Kallman twin studies, which found 86 percent concordance for exclu-sive homosexuality among monozygotic twins raised separately, bears a striking resemblance to Burt's perfect Bell curves, among its other defects. Also to be noted are its opening paragraphs, where Kall-man speaks of the "intrinsically malad-justed" nature of gay people. [39]

Again, no study searching for hor-monal differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals which has found any appreciable variance has been successfully repeated by other researchers. [return to text]

o Freud's views on human activity (and Reich's, who differs here only in denying *thanatos*) are partially summar-ized in this sentence: "Primitive man [sic] thus made his work agreeable, so to speak, by treating it as the equivalent of and substitute for sexual activities." [40] With no conception of the necessity of labor, its role in transforming humanity, and the possibility of unalienated labor as its own end, Freud could neither un-derstand his own society or the past. Thus he ended with *Civilization and its Discontents* (and Reich with his counting of orgones).

This should not detract from what can only be recognized as their genius, how-ever one-sided. But Marxists who take up Freud's categories, as does D. Fernbach in "Towards a Marxist Theory of Gay Liber-ation" (1973), have no such excuses. [41] As a sufficient critique of that error al-ready exists, it will not be repeated here [42] Beginning in Freudianism means one will always be "towards" a Marxist theory, never at home in it. [return to text]

p The use of these studies and com-parisons by gay activists was a calculated polemical risk, since one is then com-pelled to struggle within the same set of assumptions as Lorenz, Tingbergen, Tiger, Ardrey and Fox, all of whom see human self-awareness as

an illusion or metaphor.

Beach now is especially careful to attempt to distinguish between what is “human” and what is “natural,” explicitly disavowing the notion that instinct or imprinting occur in humans. [[return to text](#)]

q The existence of distinct physical structures for each function has also been cited by some feminists as proof of women’s evolutionary superiority. Perhaps. [[return to text](#)]

r Not, as should be evident, “the worse side for rulers,” as Aithusser explains it. [[48](#)] In Marx’s discussion of the conquest of India, [[49](#)] he makes it plain that “progress,” up until the end of the rule of necessity, will only occur at the expense and suffering of the world’s peoples. [[return to text](#)]

s The above is difficult to accept. Yet when a baby is born we do not expect her to do more than suckle, so the process by which she gains the knowledge and ability to assemble, prepare and eat food must be a process of learning. Necessity exists, but this alone does not explain why humans do not continue to rip scavenged meat and foraged fruit with their teeth and hands. [[return to text](#)]

t This was written in April 1979.

The release of the long-delayed work, *Homosexuality in Perspective*, makes clear that Masters and Johnson do not “explicitly reject the possibility of learning a different sexual orientation.” Much of the book is devoted to a discussion of how they attempt to enable gay people to function heterosexually. Though I have not yet read the book thoroughly, it seems they spend little time explaining how heterosexuals could function as gays.

There should be no doubt that this work will exert a tremendous

influence on the popular understanding of sexuality and homosexuality. If only for that reason, Marxists must be aware of it. But the remedies suggested are equivalent to the use of Band-aids in a thermonuclear war. Worse yet, they wish to apply them to the eyes when the great, gaping wounds are in the hearts and minds of this society.

The assault later in the month on the San Francisco City Hall by 5,000 gay people and their supporters, following the judicial approval given to the murderer of gay city supervisor Harvey Milk, will be viewed by history as the most immediate and telling critique of Masters and Johnson. - May 29, 1979 [[return to text](#)]

u The landmark work of Masters and Johnson in the study of sexuality is roughly comparable to that of Taylor in productivity studies: if it could be quantified it was, if it could be filmed it was, if it could be somehow made more efficient it has been. From their work, despite the inevitable distortions by vulgarizers such as Dr. Reuben (*Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex ...; Any Woman Can*) or Alex Comfort (*The Joy of Sex*), we can obtain another view-point for an understanding of sexuality. Their work finished the job begun by Kinsey of making sexuality an acknowledged area of study, thus ripping away the veils of ignorance and hypocrisy that permeated the scientific and medical fields.

But Masters and Johnson are not by any means free of the ideological confines of science under capitalism. In their first book, *Human Sexual Response*, they approvingly quote that “the greatest single cause for family-unit destruction and divorce in this country is a fundamental sexual inadequacy within the marital unit.” This is but a short distance removed from Kant’s view of two centuries ago that marriage was “the union of two different people of different sexes with a view to the mutual possession of

each other's sexual attributes for the duration of their lives.”[[58](#)]

In other words, the role of the therapy pioneered by Masters and Johnson, *as with any therapy or activity that focuses solely or mainly on sexuality in this so-ciety*, is to reproduce in a slightly re-formed manner existing social relations.

It is also worth noting that the break-throughs achieved by Masters and Johnson merely reintroduce after a hiatus of several hundred years a variant of what was called the “Tao of Love.” Indeed, the now commonly used approach to controlling premature ejaculation, promulgated by Masters and Johnson, is almost a complete copy of the technique used over two thousand years ago in China.[[59](#)]

The preface of *Human Sexual Inadequacy*, written in 1970, contains the sentence, “It is to be hoped that human sexual inadequacy, both the entity and this book, will be rendered obsolete in the next decade.” Like all scientists who dream that a new discovery or new invention will improve the human condition for the better, they must be disappointed. [[return to text](#)]

v Again, it must be stated that there is no sexual direction or “strength” at birth. It is learned much as one learns language, and is as easily eradicated as is one's native tongue. To think that this is a deliberate process on the part of masses of families, rather than a hit and miss proposition, is a crude and cruel misunderstanding. [[return to text](#)]

w Undoubtedly, examples of this are desired. Two *glimpses* come to mind. One, at an anti-war demonstration where the police had cleared the streets and beat anyone who ventured into them, two men clasped each other's hands and walked forth into the street. The second is the scene in the movie *1900* between the pregnant communist teacher and the peasant Omo. [[return to text](#)]

x Some groups, to their credit, have attempted such analysis. The International Socialists issued a position paper in 1970 which called for support for the gay movement. Workers World Party also put forth a pamphlet on the question of the gay movement. Neither, however, gave any indication of what potential they saw the movement as having for the *main* questions facing the revolutionary struggles today.

A number of other articles, pamphlets and organizational positions can be lumped together in the category of subjective (wishful) thinking which, as Plekhanov said, is the characteristic of every reactionary period.

Typical of this thinking are the two articles in *Harvest Quarterly*, Fall, 1977. Here such sentences occur as “Homosexuals are easy to hate because we’re hard to identify.” By such “reasoning” people of color would be “difficult to hate.”[[68](#)]

The publicly circulated draft document of the Movement for a New Society likewise contains the advice to gay people to build workable alternatives to the present society, the example being “the kibbutzim in Israel, which have survived despite capitalist pressure because they have shown their viability as economic/political defense [sic!] institutions.”[[69](#)]

The only viability the kibbutzim have is as tourist attractions for North American “radicals.” They survive on Palestinian land *only* by exploiting Palestinian labor. [[return to text](#)]

y Such critiques should be of use, however. Prairie Fire Organizing Committee’s claim that there is a state-sponsored attack on gay people has no explanation for the continued victories - amid set-backs - for gay rights. [[75](#)] To name a few, recognition by the U.S. Supreme Court of the right of a gay student

organization to exist on college campuses, refusal by the Florida Supreme Court to disbar a gay lawyer solely for being gay, passage of gay ordinances by over forty cities and municipalities. PFOC cites only those things which confirm their thesis, such as the U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing the Pennsylvania law which enforces sodomy penalties against gay people alone to stand. Their approach includes “the claim, presented as an essential postulate of historical materialism, that every fluctuation of politics and ideology can be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure.” Gramsci aptly called this premise “primitive infantilism.” [76] [[return to text](#)]

z When sexuality and *concern* with sexual liberation becomes an ideological substitute for national liberation, women’s liberation, gay liberation, and the liberation of the working class, so much the better for the bourgeoisie. The Polish government with its state monopoly on alcohol is undoubtedly worried about the twenty percent alcoholism rate among Polish workers, but it will be infinitely more worried when that drops, since that will only be during a struggle against the Polish (and *Russian*) governments. Individual capitalists are undoubtedly aghast at the existence of pornography, but its prevalence in our society signifies to capitalists as a class that the working class is that much less concerned with the emancipation of itself. [[return to text](#)]

aa This is not to say that the question of gay rights doesn’t arise in the work-place or factory. It does. In an election to oust the male supremacist union leadership at a factory that employs mostly women, the main tactic used against the militant woman running for president was to smear her for not concealing the fact of her lesbianism.[79]

The intermingling of anti-gay sentiment with progressive elements of class consciousness is even more common. In a small Midwestern factory where organizing was occurring, an

unmarried white male revolutionary was questioned by some Black activists as to how he intend-ed to confront a racist white worker who was harassing all of them. “I want to see you deck the faggot,” one said. When the reply came that if the racist got hit it wouldn’t be for who he slept with but for his racism, there was some serious queer-baiting. Only support from some of the other Black workers and following through with the confrontation brought an end to it. Any male worker who doesn’t actively join in sexist jokes will be queer-baited at some point; any woman worker who confronts such jokes and harassment will be called a lesbian sooner or later. Though tactics in dealing with such situations can’t be made in advance, it is clear that not to deal with such ques-tions is again bowing to opportunism. [[return to text](#)]
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