



Discussion Bulletin

Published by

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

14 Charles Lane, New York, N. Y. 10014

Vol. 30 No. 2

July 1972

Contents

Page

IS A PARTY THAT BANS TRANSVESTISM, READY FOR GAY LIBERATION? by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch	3
GAY LIBERATION AND CLASS STRUGGLE , by David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local	7

20 cents

Page 2 :

was blank in the
original bulletin

- Marty Jan 2014

IS A PARTY THAT BANS TRANSVESTISM, READY FOR GAY LIBERATION?

by Sudie and Geb, Boston Branch

When the party a year and a half ago decided to allow gays to be members on the same basis as others, we took a big step forward in one of the few areas in which our movement had serious weaknesses. But we still ban transvestism within the party. The exact limits of this policy aren't completely clear, and may involve a certain amount of flexibility. It would seem that comrades who occasionally put on the clothing of the other sex in the privacy of their own home, may not be seen as violating this policy, but evidently it would not be acceptable for a comrade to wear drag to a bar or to a movement party.

At the past party convention, Comrade Sheppard, representing the Political Committee, told the gay workshop that this ban would be continued, despite the natural feeling of similarity between this ban and the ban that had been dropped. One consideration put forward, of course, is that—theoretically—transvestist members would tend to isolate us from the mass of the workers, who will retain many backward prejudices for a long time, including prejudices against transvestists.

A second consideration put forward at the time was that the desire to dress up as a member of the other sex was not a voluntary matter of taste, such as the desire to dress up in a certain style, modern fashion, etc. Rather, the PC representative told us, the desire to impersonate the other sex was an "obsession," something uncontrolled, which by inference made the victim of the obsession mentally unstable and not someone who would likely be fit for the rigors of party membership in the first place.

Neither of these arguments would receive a very favorable response within the gay liberation movement.

To begin to be involved in the gay liberation movement, even on a very low scale, while retaining this membership policy, would be extremely dangerous. This party policy would inevitably become a public issue, and would supply powerful ammunition to red-baiters within the gay movement. Reasonably enough, an organization which bans transvestists from membership would hardly seem fit to lead a movement of a community in which transvestism is so common, even to the point that transvestism and gayness are widely viewed as being logically related.

The demand for legal and social equality for transvestists would be a necessary demand of the gay liberation movement. It would be difficult for a party to lead struggles around such a demand, if the party itself did not grant transvestists equality internally.

We may grant that most gays are not transvestists, and that most transvestists are not gay. But gay people are too closely tied to transvestists, in associating together and in sharing similar forms of oppression, to ever be satisfied with an organization which banned transvestists.

WHAT IS TRANSVESTISM?

Generally speaking, transvestism is the desire and prac-

tice of putting on the appearance of the other sex, through whatever forms of clothing, make-up, or whatever else is traditionally associated with the other sex in one's culture. With modern medical techniques, it can be taken to the extreme of physically changing one's sex, as has been done recently by many individuals such as Christine Jorgensen. These individuals, known as transexuals, are, of course, a much smaller category (perhaps 10,000 in the U. S.).

Of course, transvestism in clothing could hardly exist among nudists or in any other culture in which there were no artificial differences in traditional clothing between the sexes. So it might be true that transvestism will disappear under socialism; but then, even the antiwar movement will disappear under socialism, so this by itself is no condemnation of transvestism.

In the stricter sense, transvestism may be thought of as the practice of impersonating the other sex in order to obtain some sort of erotic pleasure. But in many cases it would be an oversimplification to say that erotic "pleasure," in the usual sense, is involved; one's motives would often be much more complicated than that. Also, when a bearded male wears a dress but doesn't shave his face, he clearly isn't making a serious attempt to pass for female, and so impersonation of the other sex is clearly only one aspect of the phenomenon.

In recent times, such a large proportion of American women often wear the sorts of slacks that are traditionally associated with men, that this type of transvestism is generally not even thought of as being transvestism; the same can be said for women wearing the extremely short haircuts which in the past were considered masculine, and for men wearing the long hair traditionally considered feminine. Those women who do make an all-out effort to pass for male may be doing so in order to be able to hold a job they couldn't hold if it were known they were female; but again, this is not what people usually have in mind in discussing transvestism.

The most common practice usually labelled "transvestism" is the phenomenon of a male who would not consider himself gay, on occasions in the privacy of his own home or at a private party, wearing a dress or in some other way dressing up as a female. Some men like to wear female underwear underneath the customary male clothing during their everyday activity, without making it known that they are doing so. In both cases, their transvestism is just a part, often just a small part, of their personal habits and customs.

The sort of transvestism people usually think of first, is the custom of some gay males doing a more thorough job of dressing up as females, when going to gay bars, gay parties, etc. Even here, this habit is usually not at all obvious in the person's everyday life; his closest friends and co-workers commonly don't even suspect that this is how he spends his Saturday nights. This practice is generally a very practical and even necessary means

of establishing a sort of gay atmosphere, a difficult task in the anti-gay society we live in.

Transvestism is a widespread phenomenon, in each of its forms. In many forms, it isn't even considered unusual. Those who practice it in the forms which are considered unusual, generally do it only on occasions, specifically on occasions where it won't cause any social problems. They live otherwise "normal" lives as a whole; the occasional practice of transvestism has no necessary noticeable effect, one way or the other, on the day-to-day life of the transvestist. Even those who stay in drag all the time don't necessarily run up against impossible social barriers. In particular, those who go the full limit, using silicone injections and surgery to change their sex outright, commonly end up leading more or less "normal" lives as members of what for them used to be the other sex.

If we are to have any policy at all concerning transvestists, in order for that policy to be serious and thought-out it must take into account these realities of the phenomenon.

ALIENATING THE WORKERS?

Would allowing transvestists into the party on the same basis as anyone else tend to isolate us from the working class to a significant extent?

Most transvestists are not even known to be transvestists, even among their close friends and co-workers, except for those known to be sympathetic. This factor by itself would nearly eliminate any need to worry about negative repercussions.

Of course, there is a substantial sector of the working class—the gay and transvestist workers, and those sympathetic to gays and transvestists—who presumably would be *more* favorable to us if we allowed transvestism within the party. With the rise of the gay liberation movement, this sector is becoming especially political, and pound-for-pound would be more important to us as a result.

The mass of the American workers, at present, probably couldn't care less whether we allow transvestism in the party or not. When the mass of a working class moves, it tends to ignore those obstacles which in the past might have been important. In the Russian working class, as in Russian society as a whole, anti-Semitism was for a long time a very widespread and powerful prejudice, one which was by no means completely eliminated during the revolution. Logically enough, reactionaries tried to Jew-bait Trotsky to isolate the Bolsheviks from the mass of the workers. But when those workers were ready to take state power, such prejudices lost all practical significance (but would the same have happened if the Bolsheviks had catered to the anti-Semitism of the masses?).

Revolutions have been lost because the workers took to arms too soon, or not soon enough, because their leadership consciously wanted to avoid a class showdown, or because they had no leadership at all. But never has a revolution been lost because the revolutionary party included some transvestists, nor for any reason remotely comparable. There is no historical evidence that this problem should be an overriding consideration for us.

In terms of current recruitment, those workers and others who are at present within our reach, would be the least

chained to backward prejudices, and the least prejudiced against those with different life-styles even where they would want no part of such a life-style for themselves. In our climate of gay liberation, cultural change and increasing toleration of differences, those potential recruits who would be blocked from becoming Trotskyists by the existence of transvestists within the party, would on the one hand be rare, and on the other hand might not yet be ready for party membership anyway.

Thus, even on the most pragmatic level, our present policy of banning transvestism within the party probably does more to isolate us from those we could reach than a policy of allowing transvestism would. Assuming that we become more and more involved in the gay liberation movement, this situation will grow worse and worse.

Such pragmatic considerations are important, and in very extreme circumstances can even be primary. But in America at present we can be very flexible. We not only have a situation of general bourgeois legality, but even more than that, we are in a situation where archaic sexual prejudices are rapidly breaking down among the masses, where the bourgeois state is losing its ability to enforce or justify its sexually repressive laws and is even being forced to repeal them in many cases. The long-term trend is emphatically in the direction of increasing tolerance of cultural diversity, in the bedroom and elsewhere. Let us note here that in the recent period perhaps the most popular comedy act in show business is Geraldine, who in reality is Flip Wilson dressed up as a female.

In such a situation we are not compelled to cater to the most backward prejudices of the masses, but rather are very free to advocate the sort of tolerance and open-mindedness that is associated with socialist consciousness, and that aids the growth of socialist consciousness. This education is an important part of our work.

A PRECEDENT?

One important aspect of this idea of tolerance is the idea that just because someone else has a life-style or habit which is drastically different from yours, that doesn't necessarily mean that the other person's life-style or habit is an "obsession" of a mentally unstable person. In particular, transvestism is not in general an "obsession"; the Political Committee is mistaken about that.

The party once thought that gayness was obsessive—in particular, that in the repressive society we live in, gays could not be expected to be able to control their lives to the same extent that others could; therefore the party was afraid that allowing gays as members threatened to turn the party into a "therapeutic" organization (in the words of the Nov. 13, 1970 PC memorandum which dropped the ban on gays in the party). When we dropped this ban, we discovered that there had been many, many gays at all levels in the party who had been members all along. The ban hadn't as a whole kept gays out of the party, but only forced them to conceal their gayness from the party. These gay comrades had to function in an especially difficult situation within the party, just about as bad as they were likely to run into in the outside world. They were able to undergo the self-denial and abstention, the secrecy and humiliation, necessary

to conceal their gayness from their comrades. This was possible because gayness *wasn't* an obsession after all; the gay comrades had as much self-control and discipline as non-gay comrades have ever had. The rigors of being a gay person in an anti-gay society may even have made them tougher and more self-controlled than they otherwise might have been.

At this point we are willing to predict that when our ban on transvestism within the party is dropped, we will discover that many transvestists had already been members of the party as well. Like the gay comrades, the transvestist comrades have been able to conceal their transvestism from the party, because transvestism isn't an "obsession" either.

LET THOSE WHO ARE WITHOUT SIN, CAST THE FIRST STONE

Our present policy on transvestism within the party is at least partly based on the assumption that there is some special element of "obsession" involved in transvestism. To the extent that that element is present, there is nothing special about it. Every comrade has personal needs which, under certain circumstances, can present a certain amount of obsession and interference with party work. Any comrade with normal human limitations is always in danger that the ups and downs of their erotic lives may interfere to a greater or lesser extent with their political work. It's not rare for a comrade to transfer from one branch to another—sometimes very suddenly and even where there is some problem in filling the assignments they leave vacant—because of the necessities of their erotic lives. And this certainly applies even to those comrades whose erotic habits are utterly traditional. Only very rarely does this reach the point where a comrade is forced to drop out or where the party is forced to recommend a leave of absence or resignation. Virtually every comrade and potential comrade has a potential for contributing to our work, which vastly outweighs their individual limitations and faults; and this applies to transvestists just as much as it does to traditionalists.

Is anyone alive today fit to pass judgment over any supposedly deviant style of erotic pleasure? What scientific evidence would they base themselves on? What scientific evidence is there, which in any serious way presents a condemnation of transvestism? Scientific study of the erotic side of life, has scarcely even begun. Neither the bourgeois state, nor even the SWP, is in any position to pass judgment over those whose love-making styles and erotic habits are in conflict with Western tradition.

This much can be said in favor of transvestism. It challenges the traditional, sexist sex-roles of our society; it defies those who say that This Is The Best Of All Possible Cultures, So Conform Or Else; it very much involves the search for new experiences and new answers (how educational it must be to walk down the street and have people treat you as a member of the other sex—to see how the other half lives!). To use a phrase currently popular within the party, transvestism tears down a sacred cow or two. And if we may quote from Comrade Barnes, "every time a sacred cow is cut down, it is a time for rejoicing for the Trotskyist movement."

Does this mean that transvestism is revolutionary? Insofar as having the courage, and sensing the need, to

challenge bourgeois sex roles is revolutionary—transvestism is likewise revolutionary.

Is transvestism the best way to challenge bourgeois sex-roles? Is it even a halfway effective way? Or is it well-intentioned but self-defeating?

Who knows?

The party does not need to decide how good Transvestism is, if at all. This is fortunate, because we just haven't got the theoretical groundwork for such a judgment. But if the party doesn't need to endorse transvestism, it doesn't need to condemn it either. We should have no position at all on the question of the benefits or harm done by the practice of transvestism to the transvestist (we can of course agree that the practice of transvestism in no way infringes on anyone else's rights).

We especially shouldn't have the position that transvestism is an "obsession" which seriously interferes with one's functioning in life; not only is that position unrealistic, but further it can only bring us accusations that we are sexist.

If there is anyone who can safely be accused of "obsession," it is those who are insecure in their own conformism to today's majority norms, who are obsessed with the need to rationalize their own habits by condemning the non-conformist habits of others. But even this form of obsession needn't be an insurmountable barrier to party membership.

A QUESTION

It came as a surprise to some of us to discover last August that the party had a formal policy banning transvestism. This policy—naturally—had never been, and still has never been, voted on or even discussed by a party convention. It is the sort of policy whose advocates aren't very interested in having it discussed, or else they would have brought up the subject themselves. Are there any other erotic types banned from the SWP that we don't know about? How about masochists? Exhibitionists? Boot-fetishists? Animal-lovers? Etc.?

ANOTHER QUESTION

To an extent it seems that our present policy on transvestism assumes that all transvestists are male. This is not the case. Many gay females dress in a butch drag which would seem to be the counterpart of the drag worn by the male transvestist. Women who don't consider themselves gay still sometimes dress up in traditionally male outfits, even in suit-and-tie (various show business figures could be mentioned here). Tomboyism is a massive phenomenon. And masses of women wear traditionally male clothing or haircuts, without for a moment thinking of themselves as transvestists.

For a woman to wear traditionally male clothing or haircut might make it somewhat harder for her to reach certain layers of the working class with our program—just as various other forms of non-traditional clothing or habits might do. In this respect, also, there would seem to be little difference between female and male.

But to restrict female comrades from going too far away from traditionally female appearance (where would we draw the line?), would clearly cause much resistance. Changes in appearance are closely linked with develop-

ing feminist consciousness; to restrict women comrades in this regard would be far more trouble—in terms of the resistance of women in the party and in the mass movement, and in terms of a real psychological oppression as well—than could possibly be justified.

For this reason the party has correctly been tolerant of many forms of non-traditional appearance among women comrades. A female transvestist wearing the same drag she wears at gay bars, would probably not be challenged about her appearance if she wanted to join the party.

Does the party recognize the existence of female transvestism? Is our policy on transvestism the same for females and males?

THERE'S A LIMIT TO EVERYTHING.

Some comrades have pointed out that in real life there are many situations where it would be politically harmful for a comrade to sell *Militants* or otherwise represent the party, in transvestist drag—sometimes, "suicidal" would be a more accurate term.

There are limits to the ways in which a white comrade can take our politics to the Black community, and vice-versa. Male comrades can hardly carry out our interventions in the abortion movement. Straight comrades are obviously limited in the ways that they can intervene in the gay movement.

Every gay person knows that there are situations in which you don't point out that you are gay. Every transvestist knows that there are situations where you don't go in drag. Often, you wouldn't want to wear drag while trying to sell *Militants* to white construction workers, unless you could successfully pass for the other sex without arousing any suspicions.

But things aren't all bad. The type of person who goes to YSA, SMC, or other movement parties, usually could control any negative reactions they might have to seeing someone in drag at the party, and some positive education might even result. Presumably wearing drag while intervening at a gay liberation event, would have positive effects of it made any difference at all. Wearing drag at a gay bar, whether you're there for social or political purposes, would seem pretty realistic.

Gays in drag have sold gay liberation newspapers in Cambridge's Harvard Square without serious problems,

and presumably transvestist comrades could get away with selling *The Militant* in drag there, on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue, at most political college campuses, almost anywhere in Greenwich Village, and in similar places, without intolerable repercussions and maybe even with some benefits.

Those who best know the limits of what transvestists can get away with in our liberal repressive society, are the transvestists themselves; they know from experience. They know how much they have to fear losing their jobs or being evicted from their homes. They know how irrational people's responses are in the various different situations. They don't need to be locked up in the closet by others; they have their own experiences, and their own instinct for self-preservation, to guide them.

IN SUMMARY.

A basic axiom of the gay liberation movement is that the well-being of all people requires a climate of tolerance of diversity, in which today's minority is not suppressed, but treated instead as a potential future majority—a climate in which the only limitation on a person's freedom, erotic or otherwise, is that they may not infringe on the rights of others.

In order to have any chance of gaining the respect of the gay liberation movement—and in order to deserve that respect—the SWP must energetically teach this concept. But in order to preach it, we'll have to practice it.

Our present policy on transvestism is not yet generally known about outside the party. If we become active in the gay liberation movement without changing that policy, however, that is sure to change; our policy on transvestism is sure to become a very public issue, and it will discredit us badly. At that point, even if we then changed the policy, the distrust would endure.

We must act now. We must allow transvestists into the party, as individuals, on the same basis as all others, without unrealistic and unnecessary restrictions. Until we make that change, we aren't ready for the gay liberation movement.

June 6, 1972

GAY LIBERATION AND CLASS STRUGGLE

by David Thorstad,
Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

"I'm not willing just to be tolerated. That wounds my love of love and of liberty."

—Jean Cocteau

INTRODUCTION

All oppressed social layers initially hold this in common: they do not realize that they are oppressed, and once they become aware that they are, they do not have confidence that they can do anything about it. Naturally, the ruling class and the institutions it oversees do their best to maintain the oppressed in a state of paralysis and powerlessness: Blacks are treated as the inferiors of whites, women are taught to be domestic slaves, the workers are told they are John D. Rockefeller and that the country belongs to them, etc.

Gays are told, among other things, that they are a small bunch of weirdos who can't hack heterosexuality. Never mind the fact that the exclusive life-time homosexual constitutes a rather small percentage of the gay population—that rigid adherence to exclusive sexual norms is a more heterosexual phenomenon than a gay phenomenon. This is not only not widely known, it is generally considered irrelevant. It is considered irrelevant because the sexually repressive institutions of this society do not allow for homosexual behavior with *any* frequency, under *any* circumstances, in either sex, or at any age.

As a result, the anguish gays are forced to undergo is seen as a function of a personal affliction that ought to be avoided, not as oppression induced by a sexually repressive society that needs to be changed. Gays are encouraged to turn their oppression and anger in on themselves, not outward at the society in which that oppression is so deeply rooted.

Redirecting that anger is no easy task because the taboo on homosexual behavior is surrounded by such fear and ignorance. For not only has patriarchal society confiscated humanity's freedom of sexual expression, but it legitimizes that theft by getting those who have been robbed—all of us—to go along with it. Ignorance and fear of reprisal—whether in this life or in the next—are the main vehicles for accomplishing this.

Gays face difficulties no other oppressed sector faces in attempting to discover who they are. For instance, the oppressor is able to maintain his myth that we are a tiny minority by the fact that, unlike women and Blacks, who are at least identifiable to each other, we look like the oppressor. Therefore, we are able to pass for straight—not because straights are clearly identifiable, of course, but because in this society you are assumed to be straight until proven guilty. Gays are not only like fish in a sea, but in a sense we are also the sea. Homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is not an identifiable condition but merely one form of sexual behavior. But—and a big but it is, indeed!—unlike heterosexuality, it is a form of sexual behavior that our society does not accept.

Another special difficulty gays face is the prevailing notion that in order to have an objective or even interesting opinion about homosexuality, you have to be heterosexual. Even liberal-minded persons who would not think of disqualifying a woman as a source of knowledge on what it is like to be a woman or a Black on what it is like to be Black often do not hesitate to do precisely that when it comes to gays. When gays exhibit concern over something that means as much to them as their homosexuality, they are still knowingly dismissed as pests with an axe to grind.

This is what Arno Karlen does, for example, in his recently published book *Sexuality and Homosexuality*, which is being pushed by Book-of-the-Month Club and which is immodestly presented as "the definitive explanation of human sexuality, normal and abnormal." Thus he is able to dismiss such a pioneer in the scientific study of homosexuality as Magnus Hirschfeld (on whose work the Bolsheviks based their discussion of homosexuality in the Soviet Encyclopedia) "because [!] he was himself a homosexual and occasional transvestite, known affectionately in Berlin's gay world as 'Auntie Magnesia.'"

Few authorities that the gay person might turn to in this society for information about how we fit in tell us anything except that if we want a role in the play we'd better first straighten out—or else. This goes for the most humble authorities, beginning with our parents, all the way up to the celibate Judeo-Christian god, who has an uncommonly fierce distaste for our vice (in contrast, say, to the gods of the Greeks, who were said to have been responsible for introducing mortals to the joys of homosexuality).

With few exceptions (Sappho, Genet, Gertrude Stein . . .), most of our gay brothers and sisters who have made some noteworthy intellectual contribution to Western civilization and culture (Plato, Michelangelo, Gide, Proust, Shakespeare, Alexander the Great, E.M. Forster—the list would have to include virtually every important figure in history who was known to be gay) are said to have made their contribution *in spite of* their homosexuality. Since it is never assumed that homosexuality could be a positive factor in anyone's life, it is as though society were doing us a favor by submerging the sexual identity of history's homosexual greats; why should one want to be reminded of things one is trying to forget?

All oppressed groups need to discover their history and culture. The contribution of great women and Blacks has most often been simply ignored. Where possible, that of gays has been dressed up and masqueraded as the contribution of heterosexuals. There is a reason for this: The proper idols for the oppressed are idols the oppressor finds acceptable. I'll never forget how shocked I was, and how proud, when more than ten years ago I first read Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and discovered that someone who was widely considered one of the greatest American poets was not only homosexual, but he actually wrote about it with something like the joy I myself felt. Most gay writers have not done this. Many had to give

between homosexuality and the family remains.) The essential functions of this institution with which homosexuality comes into conflict would seem to be the following:

1. *As a unit for transferring inheritance in patriarchal society and for maintaining the family line.* This not only enforces chastity and monogamy upon women (so the father can be certain his heirs are his own), but the prospect of inheritance binds the sons more closely to their fathers and makes them more willing to accept paternal authority, thereby enhancing the authority of the father over the sons.

2. *As a reproduction unit for supplying a labor force and fighting men, as well as a reserve army of labor consisting of women.* Marriage becomes a duty to one's ancestors, whose family line must be perpetuated, and to the tribe. Women are married off as a matter of course since their purpose is reproduction. A man who evades his reproductive responsibilities to his family and tribe tends to be looked upon with hostility or suspicion.

Homosexual behavior, of course, does not now and never did constitute a great threat to reproduction per se. In a society free of sexual restraints, it simply coexisted and overlapped with heterosexual behavior. But with patriarchal society, reproduction within the framework of the family institution becomes a socially imposed duty; homosexuality, being both an unpredictable element and a nonproductive form of sexuality, tends to be regarded as antisocial.

3. *As a unit for instilling the proper ideological outlook in children.* It is in the family that the sex-typing and rigidly delineated sex roles are first learned, and with them the proper attitude of submissiveness to paternal authority on the part of the women and children. The patriarchal family is designed not to protect but to prevent the free expression of sexuality.

The nuclear family is a heterosexual unit. As such it attempts to suppress normal homosexual impulses in all of its members. The inability of this institution to provide any opportunity for the expression of this natural side of human sexuality is one of the things wrong with it.

The rigid definitions of sex role and sexual identity that take shape with the patriarchal family constitute a tyrannical straitjacket on the polymorphous nature of human sexuality and temperament. The straitjacket is a heterosexual one, and all the institutions of patriarchal class society are geared toward seeing to it that people stay in it. Homosexual behavior, by its very nature, does not.

Sex for Fun, Not Reproduction

One of the most important reasons why homosexuality came into conflict with patriarchal society is that its sole goal is pleasure. The stability of patriarchal society required the elimination of pleasure as the primary purpose of sexuality. Pleasure was subordinated to reproduction as a justification for sex.

Unlike heterosexuality—which, while also originally engaged in for pleasure, nevertheless brought about a perpetuation of the species as a by-product—homosexuality was a purely nonproductive form of sexuality. It was engaged in for fun only. As a result, its purpose could not be subverted and given a new meaning by a sex-negative society.

The Christian notion that sex is an evil to be avoided by the godly but tolerated in the weak, and the teleo-

logical notion that sex is pleasurable so that people can be induced to reproduce, say a lot about the extent to which a sex-repressive society destroys healthy heterosexual behavior. But while heterosexual sex has come to at least be tolerated, if only as a necessary evil, homosexual sex has generally been suppressed as an insolent and unnecessary evil. Moralists who extol the sex-repressive heterosexual norms of patriarchal society tell those who will listen that sex for pleasure is "degenerate," "animalistic," "uncivilized," etc.

The Virility-Aggressivity Equation

With the concentration of wealth in the hands of the male sex that occurred during the transition to patriarchy arose a need to redefine sex in terms of roles that related to property ownership and social status. Women and gays became the victims of this redefinition.

Engels called the overthrow of the matriarchy the "world historic defeat of the female sex." But the social degradation and domestic servitude that became the lot of women with the triumph of the patriarchy went together with a new sexual degradation as well. For it appears that with the social downfall of women came a change in the woman's position in coitus: Both Kinsey and Reich point out that in primitive society, the woman's usual position was not below the man but on top of him, in a squatting position. And while this shift to the lower position probably occurred because of social and cultural considerations of dominance and submission, it quite possibly also had something to do with anatomical considerations: perhaps primitive women preferred this top position because of the greater freedom of movement and clitoral stimulation it afforded and from the greater pleasure they obtained from the deeper penetration of the penis.

Whatever the case, the passive-active stereotype of sexual intercourse that came to prevail in patriarchal society entailed a humiliating and degrading concept of the role of women in the heterosexual sex act. Perhaps it is to this that we can trace the fact that patriarchal society has always tended to take a more negative view of the so-called "passive" participant in male sodomy. There is apparently no lower rank to which a male can stoop in a male supremacist society than to imitate the position of a woman in coitus. In some societies that had slavery (ancient Egypt, for example), defeated enemies were often sodomized by the victors in what was undoubtedly seen not primarily as an act of pleasure but as a way of humiliating the conquered. Even today in the Muslim countries of the Middle East, where homosexuality has always met with greater tolerance than in the Judeo-Christian West, it is the "passive" partner in male sodomy who is especially scorned.

Can not a hint of the common origins of the oppression of women and gays be detected in this tendency of patriarchal society to equate virility and aggressivity, superiority and supremacy?

An interesting example of how seriously the ruling class takes the need to preserve its male supremacist norms and how conscious it is of the relationship between homosexuality and the subordinate role class society assigns to women can be found in the way the British ruling class met the shaking up of sex roles that was beginning to occur with industrialization (which undermines the au-

thority of the patriarch, and which squeezes out domestic crafts and provides the basis for women to become wage-earners and to begin to free themselves from dependence on men). In 1885, just a few years after the Married Women's Property Act, one of the first important steps forward in the emancipation of women, the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed making private homosexual acts of "gross indecency" (not buggery, which already could bring a life sentence) a crime for the first time, subject to a maximum of two years imprisonment with hard labor.

Mammalian Heritage

Human beings during the prehistorical period obviously did not write down or otherwise preserve for posterity just what they did and thought as far as sex was concerned. But since it was a period free of sexual restraints—including incest—we can assume that they were limited only by their imagination and by what they found enjoyable. This should lay to rest any question about whether or not primitives engaged in homosexual acts.

Of course, even the least knowledgable person can authoritatively assert that primitives engaged in heterosexual acts—if they hadn't, we would not, among other things, be in a position to hold this discussion. Gays, to be sure, cannot (but why should they feel the need to?) use this line of argument in any effort to show that our primitive ancestors did indeed indulge in homosexual sex, and thereby feel we have somehow justified our sexual orientation. But such an argument is never used following any objective investigation of the subject; rather, it is a contribution made by some leftists to the already long and tedious lineup of alleged "proofs" of the superiority of heterosexuality. In reality, the notion that homosexual behavior has not always coexisted with heterosexual behavior but instead first developed as one of the hangups spawned by class society is nothing more than a variation on a theme that a sex-repressive society has worked to death in its campaign to stamp out the blight of homosexuality.

Homosexual behavior has played a role in human societies since the beginning of human history. It occurs in societies that encourage it, it occurs in those that merely tolerate it, and it occurs in those that attempt to suppress it. The reason for this ubiquitous nature of homosexual behavior is that it is not a deviant form of sexuality but simply one form that the expression of the normal human sexual drive takes. This universal appeal of homosexuality itself explains the intensity of the measures that have been taken to combat it.

Homosexuality is a natural expression of human sexual potential and belongs to the mammalian heritage of general sexual responsiveness. "The homosexual has been a significant part of human sexual activity ever since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal," observed Kinsey.

And not only the human animal, it might be added, but animals in general. People unaware of the investigations of scientists into the matter used to argue that homosexual behavior was "unnatural" because chimpanzees didn't do it. Aside from the fact that it could be argued that chimpanzees don't play chess or do a lot of other things human beings do either, the fact is that when they

were observed, it was found that homosexual behavior was actually something that they could be said to hold in common with humans. Indeed, two authorities on animal sexuality—the anthropologist Clellan S. Ford and the psychologist Frank A. Beach in their cross-cultural and cross-species study *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*—conclude that the tendency toward homosexual behavior "is inherent in most if not all mammals including the human species."

This subject was discussed by Kinsey too, who noted: "It may be true that heterosexual contacts outnumber homosexual contacts in most species of mammals, but it would be hard to demonstrate that this depends upon the 'normality' of heterosexual responses, and the 'abnormality' of homosexual responses. In actuality, sexual contacts between individuals of the same sex are known to occur in practically every species of mammal which has been extensively studied."

Psychiatrists who wonder "What causes homosexuality?" are asking the wrong question. (The very fact that they never ask "What causes heterosexuality?" of course betrays their heterosexual bias and serves to justify their use of the most extreme methods—including torture through electric shock treatments—to force their gay clients into a heterosexual mold.) The question that should be asked is not "What causes homosexuality?" but "What causes society, including its 'scientific' lackeys, to attempt to suppress homosexuality?" The answer lies in the sexual repression endemic to patriarchal society.

Engels and Reich on Homosexuality

The task of shedding light on the true nature of homosexual oppression and the revolutionary potential of the struggle for gay liberation is not made easier by the fact that erroneous notions about homosexuality crept into the work of two of the most original and important contributors toward explaining the relationship between sexual oppression and class struggle—Engels and Reich.

In the *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Engels says that the Greeks "fell into the abominable practice of sodomy and degraded alike their gods and themselves with the myth of Ganymede" (a charming myth about a boy whose beauty prompts Zeus to abduct him for purposes of carnal pleasure); he describes the Germanic peoples, in an obvious reference to homosexuality, as being "morally much deteriorated," particularly from their migratory contact with nomads around the Black Sea from whom they acquired not only great skills in horsemanship, but also "gross, unnatural vices"; and in his discussion of the modern notion of individual sex love, he appears to brush aside as a weakness what was really a strength of the gay who, along with Sappho, really founded the literary genre of lyric poetry—the "classical love poet of antiquity, old Anacreon"—as someone to whom "sexual love in our sense mattered so little that it did not even matter to him which sex his beloved was."

These views are more naive than they are malicious (Engels' views on sodomy—which even heterosexuals can and do do—certainly strike us today as embarrassingly naive and even prudish). Though backward, they should nevertheless be regarded with some degree of tolerance. After all, his *Origin of the Family* appeared prior to the work of Freud and at a time (1884) when the scientific study of sexual behavior was only beginning to get under way.

One cannot, however, be so generous in the case of Wilhelm Reich.

Reich strongly opposed persecution of gays or attempts on the part of heterosexuals to force them to go straight. And he supported civil rights for gays; the German Association for Proletarian Sex Politics, for example, which he created in 1931 and which attained a membership of some 20,000 persons, contained as one of the officially stated aims of its platform the abolition of laws against homosexuality. Yet Reich's position on homosexuality never went beyond the kind of infuriating paternalism one finds among some exclusive heterosexuals who wear their willingness to tolerate gays as a badge entitling them to persist in their unfounded belief in the natural superiority of heterosexuality.

Actually, Reich's views on homosexuality, which he did not make any attempt to hide, probably did as much harm as good to the cause of sexual liberation.

When it came to homosexuality, Reich violated his own conviction that moral standards had no place in judging sexual behavior. In her biography of Reich, Ilse Ollendorf Reich points out that "he never knowingly accepted a homosexual for treatment," for example. When a "very worthy professional man" who was once referred to him for training turned out to be gay, Reich not only refused to accept him but said: "Ich will mit solchen Schweinereien nichts zu tun haben" (I don't want to have anything to do with such filth). This antigay moral standard permeates his writings on the subject.

The most extensive statement of Reich's views on homosexuality that I know of is to be found in his pamphlet *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*. This is a sort of primer of sex education, written in 1932 for the propaganda organizations of the German Communist youth.

Homosexuality, he says, is a "deviation of sexual development, and as a result is not a product of natural causes." While he accepts the Freudian concept of an inherent human bisexuality, and while he recognizes that "as far as their physical makeup is concerned, most homosexuals are completely normal," he also makes an unacceptable concession to the sex-repressive norms of heterosexual society by subscribing to the conflicting notions that heterosexuality is both natural and superior, whereas homosexuality is a "deviation," a "result of a defective sexual development during early childhood, involving very quickly an experience of great disappointment in the opposite sex." He states his simplistic belief that males become homosexual in order to cope with the feeling that their love for a harsh mother has been rejected; in the case of lesbians, it is the father who rejects their love. He believes (although it is not true) that "every homosexual can cease to have such feelings thanks to psychic treatment of a quite precise nature, whereas it never occurs that an individual who has developed normally will become homosexual as a result of the same treatment." (One can only ask in exasperation whether Reich is aware that such "treatment" is never used on individuals who have "developed normally.")

Even homosexuals who show no signs of neurosis or maladjustment but on the contrary are completely satisfied with their sexual orientation are to be pitied, suggests Reich in one of the more arrogant passages: "Many homosexuals who have learned to accept their deviation and who feel at ease with their life style object to the

fact that homosexuality is considered to be an evil or the result of a deviation of sexual development. They see in this a disparagement of their sexual orientation. . . . Above all, young people must be spared from definitively turning toward homosexuality, not for moral reasons, but for reasons of pure sexual economy; it can in fact be verified, that the sexual satisfaction of the healthy heterosexual individual is more intense than the sexual satisfaction of the healthy homosexual."

One would be curious to know just what steps Reich took to "verify" the superiority of heterosexuality. One can safely assume, however, that he did not consult any happy homosexuals or bisexuals in his rush to preach the superiority of the heterosexual orgasm.

The fact that this is the kind of statement one might expect to hear from someone who regards gays as "filth" (however "healthy") does not make one any more inclined to tolerate it. Indeed, it is against the harm done by precisely such attitudes as Reich's that the gay liberation movement is struggling.

Reich's belief in the superiority of heterosexuality is not based on either scientific investigation or, it appears, personal experience. It is rooted in a purely mystical faith that is uncharacteristic of most of his early work. In *The Invasion of Compulsory Sex Morality*, for instance, he repeatedly describes this notion with such unscientific terms as "natural genital embrace" (read: penis in vagina), "normal genital goal" (read: exclusive heterosexuality), etc.

Starting from his subjective premise that the heterosexual orgasm is more "satisfying" than the homosexual one, Reich deduces that homosexuality did not occur among primitive people whose sex-positive environment prevented them from choosing something second best: "Among primitive peoples, who lead a satisfying and tranquil sex life, and who do not prevent sexual development among the children, homosexuality—except [?—D. T.] in its spiritual form, friendship—does not exist." (*Sexual Struggle of Youth*) Reich regards this argument as the clincher in his case for the superiority of heterosexuality; he remains oblivious to the fact that his premise is both faulty and absurd (who but god has the authority to lay down laws on what is "sexually satisfying"?); he therefore fails to see that the very freedom of sexual development that he associates with primitive society itself precludes the limiting of sexual expression to the confines of an exclusive heterosexuality that first reared its head later, as part of the sex-repressive requirements of the new patriarchal society.

Reich does not take complete credit for this idea: "According to the most recent research of Malinowski, the English ethnologist, homosexuality appears among primitives only to the extent that the missionaries—these fore-runners of capital—begin to introduce Christian morality into natural sexual life and to separate the sexes." The research Reich is referring to was presented in Malinowski's *The Sexual Life of Savages* (1930), which Reich incorporated into his *Invasion of Compulsory Sex Morality* (1931).

Malinowski's own heterosexual bias is typical of the attitude of many Western scientists who observe primitives. The fact that their explanations of what they see are sometimes thoroughly immersed in the sex-repressive perspective of the Judeo-Christian tradition does nothing

ing to enhance the credibility of their observations. In the case of Malinowski, this shortsightedness meshed perfectly with Reich's own mystical notion of the superiority of the heterosexual orgasm.

Children among the Trobriander Islanders, Malinowski explains, begin their sexual exploration at a very early age, "long before they are able really to carry out the act of sex." As they "satisfy their curiosity" about the sex organs, they indulge in genital manipulation and such "minor perversions" as oral stimulation. "As they are untrammelled by the authority of their elders and unrestrained by any moral code, except that of specific tribal taboo, there is *nothing but their degree of curiosity*, or ripeness, and of 'temperament' or sensuality, to determine how much or how little they shall indulge in sexual pastimes." (My emphasis—D. T.)

And yet Malinowski says later on: "It is fully confirmed in the Trobriands that free sex life does not allow any homosexuality to form there. It cropped up in the Trobriands only with the influence of white man, more especially of white man's morality. The boys and girls on a Mission Station, penned in separate and strictly isolated houses . . . had to help themselves out as best they could, since that which every Trobriander looks upon as his due and right was denied to them. According to very careful inquiries made on non-missionary as well as missionary natives, homosexuality is the rule among those upon whom white man's morality has been forced in such an irrational and unscientific manner."

Does Malinowski (and by extension Reich) expect us to believe that the curiosity of the primitive Trobrianders was inferior to that of chimpanzees and other lower mammals who have no contact with Christian missionaries? Do subhuman primates and humans living in class society share homosexuality in common, while it remains alien to primitive humans? Is homosexuality something that was imposed on previously happy exclusive heterosexuals? Are we really to believe that the variety of sexual experience homosexual behavior affords arose only with the imposition of sexual restrictions? Is variety of sexual experience compatible with sexual restriction and taboo, or does it thrive in a state of sexual freedom? Is exclusive heterosexuality really the full expression of social and sexual freedom?

To ask these questions is, admittedly, in some degree to answer them. But the very fact that they need to be asked at all with regard to someone like Reich, who tolerated homosexuality (although he found it distasteful) and supported civil rights for homosexuals (as a socialist and democrat), is an eloquent illustration of the fact that the liberation of gay people involves much more than the mere guarantee that we will be tolerated, that laws discriminating against us will be eliminated, that we will no longer be burned at the stake, involuntarily castrated, murdered, ostracized, or viewed by straights with that "there-but-for-god-go-I" look. For tolerance is relatively easy; everybody at least likes to be regarded as tolerant ("Why some of my best friends are . . .").

But gay liberation does not involve a struggle of misfits to be treated not as criminals but as misfits. Gay liberation involves the winning of full human rights and freedom of sexual expression not just for ourselves, but for everyone. It means freeing the full sexual capacities of all of us (including those of us who have already,

for whatever reasons, rejected the exclusive heterosexual norms of patriarchal society, but who are by no means yet the free human beings we all want to become), as well as those who are still desperately clinging to the norms of exclusive heterosexuality). Ultimately, it involves a struggle for sexual liberation in general.

This is not an esoteric or exotic struggle but one with significant links to the class struggle.

HOMOSEXUAL LIBERATION AND CLASS STRUGGLE

Sexual oppression and the imposition of sexual restrictions are at the origins of the development of class oppression. And the struggle against sexual oppression has a role to play in the elimination of class oppression. The fact that the effects of thousands of years of the suppression of freedom of sexual expression will be totally eliminated only with the elimination of class society does not diminish the relevance of the sexual liberation struggle today to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat for socialism. On the contrary, it enhances that relationship and enriches the struggle for socialism. In addition, a special significance is conferred upon the sexual liberation struggle by the fact that the revolutionary act of taking ownership of the means of production out of the hands of the capitalist class, while of course essential, is not sufficient to automatically bring about sexual emancipation and eradicate the attitudes inculcated over millenia.

"Sexual suppression is one of the cardinal ideological means by which the ruling class subjugates the working population," wrote Reich. The fact that the majority of people are still not aware of this does not make it any less true. And the fact that most people today think of homosexuality in terms of the lies and fears imposed by an exclusively heterosexual society does not mean they always will. The gay liberation movement has a contribution to make to their developing awareness. It is a contribution that will tend both to undermine some key props of capitalist society and strengthen the combativity of millions.

The fact that this struggle does not necessarily take place around issues traditionally associated with the trade-union movement in no way reduces its significance for the revolutionary movement. For the issue of sexual oppression that it raises is one that is not merely of interest but of vital concern to everyone. With perhaps a slight exaggeration, Reich put his finger on this when he noted that "Whereas economic misery affects only a small segment of society, sexual misery encompasses all social strata." And the economic deprivation of the poor and the working masses certainly does nothing to ease their sexual misery, cramming them together in the antisexual tinderboxes of the mongamous nuclear family. The special vendetta of patriarchal society against homosexual behavior is an important aspect of the sexual misery of millions.

The nuclear family is a microcosm of society. It is there that children learn the sex roles necessary for proper functioning in capitalist society; it is there that they learn how to be the kind of punctual bootlickers that make good and well-adjusted workers like their father. He may not be aware that capitalist society has taken away his

ability to control his destiny in exchange for the responsibility of properly training his children to grow up to be as subservient to the authority of capital as he is. He may not be aware that his tyrannical ban on the free development and expression of the sexuality of his children is a socially necessary task whose subsequent reinforcement society has entrusted to ponderous and complex institutions—religion, the law, schools, the mass media, the police, psychiatry. He no doubt does not know that his dread of finding signs of homosexuality among his children is not rooted in any natural response of the organism to danger but in thousands of years of diligent efforts by patriarchal society to extirpate it and in his own awareness of such impulses in himself. He may not realize that his own sexual misery, while sometimes exacerbating the neuroses of his children, is a necessary ingredient in the proper execution of his task. He may not even be aware of his own sexual misery or that all this need not be.

Sex Typing

One of the strongest implements society uses to mould the growing child into acceptable social forms and to keep people there as adults is the coercion to behave like a member of one's own sex (to be a *real* man, to be *really* feminine). Anyone who deviates from these norms is quickly labeled "queer." Gay people do not fit into these sex roles in one key way: They violate the norm of exclusive heterosexuality that underlies them.

These heterosexual sex stereotypes and definitions not only have nothing whatever to do with real human potential; they are also reflections of the social needs of the dominant, capitalist society, and they change as those needs change. With the rise of entrepreneurial capitalism, for instance, the rugged individual was the ideal—at least the male ideal. Today there are no more entrepreneurs to speak of and the rugged individual image is no longer useful. In today's consumer society, it is not people with initiative who are needed, but rather people who lack it, people who follow orders—whether it be buying detergent or killing Communists in Vietnam or hating homosexuals. In a technologically advanced, complex stage of imperialism, the male ideal is the astronaut, the mechanized, unthinking robot.

These images change for women, too. During the second world war, when the capitalists needed to tap the reserve army of labor to which women belong, the image projected for women was not that of today's happy housewife, content with the unrewarding labor of a home-centered life. No woman today who refuses to play dumb and pretend that she likes being denied the opportunity to develop as a free human being, independent of a man, will for long escape the accusation that she too is "queer." (This is the source of some of the lesbian baiting of the women's liberation movement.)

These sex stereotypes are used not only to sell the products of a consumer society. They are used to keep people in line. If you spend all your energy trying to conform to this society's warped and rigid definitions of a "real man" and a "real woman"—and both straights and closeted gays spend enormous amounts of energy doing precisely that—then you will have none left for the struggle to overthrow the society that imposes those definitions upon you.

Most Gays Are Workers

The struggle for gay liberation is not relevant to the struggle of working people for socialism merely because in a general sense the enemy of both is the same. It is of much more immediate relevance as well because millions of workers are gay. Although homosexual behavior occurs in all classes, it is most widespread among the working class, if for no other reason than that most people in our society are workers. In addition, Kinsey's statistics would suggest that the percentage of gays too is higher among the lower social strata. (This is, of course, not to belittle the fact that homosexuality, which this society finds no way to integrate in a positive fashion into its institutions, is found in the middle and upper classes. Actually, with the growth of the gay liberation movement, this ubiquitous nature of homosexuality may itself aid the undermining of bourgeois moral values and institutions.)

It is true that most gay workers are not visibly gay. Except for a few professions (and even in these, gays still run certain risks, as the firing of Michael McConnell from his job as a librarian at the University of Minnesota showed), it is still occupational suicide for most gays to disclose their sexual orientation. Their secrecy is a matter of survival. But it is a secrecy that none of us ever willingly chose but that was instead thrust upon us by the institutions of a sick heterosexual society.

Many gay workers can undoubtedly be persuaded to come out and shed this secrecy. Perhaps many never will. But even those who stay in their closets may very well be inspired by the gay liberation movement to greater combativity in other areas—as workers, as Blacks, as Chicanos, as women, etc.

What is Gay Liberation All About Anyway?

The oppression gays suffer is not primarily economic, though we usually do suffer economic deprivation or job-related anxiety as a result of the antigay discrimination promoted by an exclusively heterosexual society. We are not oppressed because of our role in the family (though the fact that we belong to this unit—as fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles . . .—is certainly one important aspect of our oppression) but because the family structure and the institutions of patriarchal society do not allow any room for homosexual behavior; in a sense we are oppressed because we have defected from our intended social roles. We are not oppressed because we constitute a behavioral minority but because we engage in a perfectly natural form of human sexuality that conflicts with the requirements of patriarchal society. What is involved is not so much the oppression of gay people as the attempted suppression of homosexual behavior. This is a rather important distinction.

Certainly an immediate aim of gay liberation is to obtain civil rights for the minority of human beings who are presently homosexually oriented. This means fighting for equal rights legislation and extension of civil rights provisions in housing, employment and public accommodation to all people regardless of sexual orientation; it means fighting to remove homosexual acts and, indeed, all noncoercive sexual acts, from the penal codes; it means fighting to end solicitation and cross-dressing laws, which are used to victimize gays when other laws have been repealed; it means fighting against legalized

torture of our gay brothers and sisters by heterosexual sadists in the psychiatric profession; it means fighting against discrimination against gays in prison and for their right to receive visitors for sexual purposes on an equal basis with straight prisoners, and without the degrading trapping of marriage; it means fighting to end police harassment and entrapment of gays; it means defending the right of gays in the armed forces and in prison; it means fighting against Mafia exploitation of the gay community; it means demanding that the news media start viewing us as news fit to print; etc.

Certainly an immediate aim of gay liberation is to insure the democratic right of homosexually oriented persons to be gay without being killed, beaten, imprisoned and ostracized. Certainly it involves a struggle to persuade the heterosexual majority to treat persons with a homosexual life style with tolerance. This alone will be a difficult struggle: A survey a couple of years ago showed that two out of three Americans look on gays with disgust, discomfort, and fear. To most Americans, homosexuality is more of a threat to society than abortion, adultery, or prostitution.

But our struggle is not one merely for tolerance but for full acceptance as human beings. We are not out to preserve the subculture of the gay world into which straight society forces us when it fails to turn us into docile heterosexuals. Our goal is not to preserve any "homosexual way of life." The very concept of "homosexual" as a distinct variety of human being is a myth deliberately fostered by heterosexual society to buttress its rigid exclusive heterosexual norms. In reality, however, there are only people whose sexual drives naturally lead them to engage in various kinds of sexual acts, including homosexual acts.

Our struggle is ultimately for a society in which there will no longer be "homosexuals" and "heterosexuals" but simply human beings expressing their natural sexual inclinations. Our struggle is for a society that will ensure and protect the free development and expression of sexuality. Our struggle is for a society that not only tolerates homosexuality but that provides for a positive institutional integration of homosexuality. Such a society will not be a heterosexual society.

The fact that today, for the first time in history, large numbers of gays are throwing off the yoke of secrecy and struggling openly for their rights adds a heretofore unseen element to the struggle for social change. It is an element that the revolutionary party, having recognized it, must now champion and help integrate into the revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalist society.

CULTURAL ROOTS OF ANTIHOMOSEXUAL PREJUDICE

One of the essential functions of religion is to stamp society's antisexual restrictions with divine authority and to instill a sense of guilt in anyone who violates, or is even tempted to violate, them. "Not much education is required—only a little intellectual courage—to recognize that the powers seeking to dominate do not bring colonial people Christianity, clothing, and 'morality' out of cultural considerations but because they want to anchor the spirit of the coolie in the individual," noted Reich.

Without any doubt, one of Christianity's greatest achievements along this line has been in the psychic mutilation

it has inflicted upon millions of gays. There is probably no other group in which the "spirit of the coolie" has been so thoroughly imbedded, and for so long. Nowhere has the antihomosexual phobia of class society attained a greater intensity than in the societies with a Judeo-Christian heritage.

Judeo-Christian Heritage

The antigay phobia that permeates American society to one degree or another infects all societies with a Judeo-Christian heritage. It was this phobia of the ancient Hebrews and the early Christians, and not the more permissive attitude of Hellenic Greece, toward homosexuality that came to exert the predominating influence in the West.

While this antigay paranoia can be traced back to the ancient Hebrews, however, even they did not always hold homosexuality in such contempt. Wainwright Churchill, in his book *Homosexual Behavior Among Males*, points to the fact that "mouth-genital and homosexual activities played a part in the religious rituals of the ancient Hebrews, and homosexual as well as heterosexual prostitutes thrived in the very precincts of the temples."

For reasons that are not entirely clear, the development of a hostile attitude toward homosexuality among the Hebrews occurred around 700 B. C., following the Babylonian Captivity. The break with practices such as homosexuality that occurred at that time distinguished the Hebrews from neighbors like the Canaanites and the Chaldeans, with whom they had previously shared such practices.

It seems likely that in their struggle with neighboring tribes who used male cult prostitutes in religious rituals exalting sexuality as a creative force in nature, the Hebrews came to associate homosexuality with idolatry. The intensity of their antigay phobia (if not the phobia itself) could thus be traced to religious roots. This association has persisted under Christianity where the tendency to link homosexuality and heresy has frequently branched out to include treason as well.

Mosaic law included 36 crimes punishable by death. Of these, 18—or one half—were for the so-called "unnatural" acts: between a man and an animal, between a woman and an animal, and between two men. "If a man also lieth with mankind as he lieth with a woman," warns *Leviticus* 20:13, "both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death." The most severe method of execution—death by stoning—was prescribed for this innocent and loving act.

Sodom and Gomorrah

One of the most tenacious legends to arise out of this hostility toward homosexuality is that of Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin of these cities was so loathsome to the Hebrew god that he sent two enticing angels down to test its residents to see if they had turned from their evil ways. They had not. Victims of this first recorded case of entrapment, they succumbed to temptation, and god mercilessly wiped out the cities with fire and brimstone.

The use of fire and brimstone would seem to suggest volcanic activity. But there are no volcanoes around the Dead Sea. Which suggests that the story was introduced from some other area and served as a mythological ex-

planation for the destruction of a city that had long since disappeared. The myth became a vehicle for the Hebrew religion.

And while it seems possible, if not likely, that the real sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not homosexuality so much as their inhabitants violated a code of hospitality by forcing their desires upon unwilling guests, the important thing is that homosexuality came to be viewed by the Hebrews as the vice of depraved, alien cultures, whether Egyptian or Greek.

The Hebrew laws against homosexual acts occur in chapters associating homosexuality with other customs of neighboring cultures—called "the doings of the land of Egypt" and "the doings of the land of Canaan." Sodom thus became a symbol in the Hebrew tradition of the practices of these and other cultures god's chosen people viewed as alien and hostile. And the merciless retribution Jehovah rained down upon Sodom was used for more than 2,000 years to justify the most barbaric and sadistic tortures of gay people. In fact, it was used by several California state legislators last fall in order to justify their vote against a bill removing the criminality status for oral and anal sex acts. The bill lost.

The Christian Emperors

Before the advent of Christianity, the Roman state made no attempt to suppress homosexuality. Then, in 342 A. D., Constantius issued a decree making it a capital crime—or, as he called it, "exquisite punishment." The earliest Christian emperors punished homosexual intercourse by decapitation. "When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire," wrote E. Westermarck in his book *Christianity and Morals*, "a veritable crusade was opened against it."

Valentinian went further and decreed in 390 A. D. that those found guilty of the "shameful custom" of sodomy should be publicly burned alive—recalling the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It was the superstitious and fanatic Justinian, however, who, in two edicts in 538 and 544, A. D., codified and set the pattern for subsequent laws against sodomy. The provisions of this code prevailed from the time of his reign until the adoption of the Napoleonic Code in 1810.

Justinian believed that homosexuality was the cause of the earthquakes, floods, and the epidemic of the plague that threatened his and his predecessor's reigns. It is to him that we can trace the notion that homosexuality endangers the security of the state, a notion that persists to this very day and which was widely invoked against gay people during the witch-hunt of the 1950s in the United States.

The penalty this Christian lawgiver prescribed for those who had "gone to decay through that abominable and impious conduct deservedly hated by God" was a painful death preceded by mutilation and castration. Justinian's psychopathic wife, Empress Theodora, was erotically aroused by torture and is said to have been driven to masturbation while witnessing castrations. Gibbon, in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, describes one of these tortures as "the insertion of sharp reeds into the pores and tubes of most exquisite sensibility."

Teachings of the Church

The Christian church used two main arguments against

homosexuality: that it was specially condemned by god in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that homosexual acts were, in and of themselves, "unnatural." Variations on these two arguments are found in the pronouncements of many of the church Fathers and have found their way into the wording of nearly all the laws against homosexual acts "frenzies of the lusts which exceed the laws of nature." St. Augustine considered sodomy a bodily defilement and said that "those shameful acts, such as were committed in Sodom, ought everywhere and always to be detested and punished."

Clement of Alexandria saw in the belief of the ancients that a rabbit gets an additional anus each year clear proof of the lustful propensities of this animal. He went so far as to claim that it was for this very reason that Moses forbade the eating of rabbits, declaring them unclean, and that in so doing, Moses was implicitly condemning all "unnatural" modes of coitus, especially pederasty.

It was Thomas Aquinas who provided what came to be considered by subsequent moral theologians as "proof" that homosexual acts were against the law of nature. He argued that because the goal of the "sin against nature" was pleasure, not procreation, it therefore "offends against reason, is a species of lust." He considered both sodomy and masturbation to be more serious sins than any other sin of lust, including those, like rape, that cause harm to another person!

The Middle Ages

The most important medieval enactments against homosexual acts were four canons adopted by the Council of Nablouse in 1120. Of the 25 canons it adopted, most were directed at the "sins of the flesh." Burning was prescribed as the punishment by this council.

Havelock Ellis, in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, claims that "in France in the thirteenth century the Church was so impressed by the prevalence of homosexuality that it reasserted the death penalty for sodomy at the Councils of Paris (1212) and Rouen (1214)."

Throughout the Middle Ages, homosexuality was associated with heresy. "Heretics were as a matter of course accused of unnatural vice," states Westermarck in *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*. Though there are no exact figures available, it seems likely that thousands upon thousands of gay people were burned at the stake, usually for witchcraft or heresy. This practice of burning homosexuals at the stake actually continued into the eighteenth century, the "Age of Enlightenment." Even the Renaissance, with its undertone of homosexuality, did not encourage any voices to be raised in protest of trials and death sentences for homosexuals; accusations were vehemently denied.

Some apologists for Christianity, like Derrick Sherwin Bailey in his biased but informative *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, attempt to play down the church's role in murdering gay people by arguing that it was the secular authorities, not the church, that had the power to burn people at the stake, and that homosexuals were only put to death if their "immorality in conduct was accompanied by grave error in belief" or if their behavior was "attributable to heretical ideas." But in a society completely dominated by the church, the line between ecclesiastical and secular authority was a

fine one indeed. Moreover, Bailey neglects to say what, if anything, prevented the charge of homosexuality from being escalated to include "grave error in belief" or "heretical ideas." He even goes so far as to praise the church for its generosity in considering the homosexual not merely a criminal, but a sinner as well, which meant that repentance was possible! Yet what if the gay sinner was unrepentant? Would not this constitute a "grave error in belief"? Bailey's silence on this speaks volumes about the suffering of gay people during the Middle Ages.

Homosexuality and Heresy

Bailey himself discusses at some length one of the most dramatic, and shameful, examples of the tendency of the medieval church to equate heresy and homosexuality: the crusade against the Albigensian heretics in the thirteenth century. Just how widespread homosexuality was among them seems difficult to establish, although Bailey believes it was widespread, and quotes J. C. S. Runciman (*The Medieval Manichee*) as saying that the Albigensians had "an easygoing attitude about sexual morals, an attitude peculiarly agreeable to the people of southern France." Whatever the case, it is significant that the charge of homosexuality, whether real or fabricated, was invoked as justification for massacring the Albigensians.

"During the Middle Ages," says Bailey in a most revealing passage, "many heretics (and among them the most notable and dangerous were dualists [who, like the Albigensians, believed that matter is evil—D. T.], and propagated teaching about marriage and coitus which was repugnant not only to Christian doctrine but also to human reason and sentiment. Their theories found expression not only in wild and defiant assertions calculated to subvert morality, but occasionally also in pro-

miscuous orgies, while some construed them as justifications for homosexual practices."

The association of homosexuality and heresy was explicitly made linguistically. For the Albigensian heresy was an outgrowth of a Manichean heresy originating with the Bulgars. In French, they were called "bougres," and the word "bougrerie" came to refer both to the heresy of the Albigensians and the sin of sodomy. This is also the source of the English word "buggery" (a vulgarization of "bougrerie"), which acquired the additional meaning of intercourse with animals.

The Judeo-Christian tradition condemning homosexual love as not only sin against the law of god but a violation of the laws of nature was fully developed by the end of the thirteenth century. It was to remain dominant throughout Europe for 500 years, and it is still powerful today in the Anglo-Saxon countries, especially in the United States, where it holds sway in both the law and in popular attitudes (though, as Kinsey has shown, popular attitudes are generally ahead of the law on this question).

The fact that the phobia against homosexuality, weighed down as it is with superstition and ignorance, persists today, is a source of great anguish for gay people. It is a phobia, however, that is deeply rooted in the needs of capitalist class society. Obviously reason alone will not suffice to eliminate it. Nor will it suffice to bring about a reform of the antigay laws and other blatant forms of antigay oppression takes—however important and necessary the struggle against the forms of oppression is.

The eradication of antigay phobia and the gay oppression it helps to reinforce and perpetuate can only be accomplished by the revolutionary transformation of the society that breeds them.

June 18, 1972