

TOWARDS A SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS OF THE GAY QUESTION

—— LOS ANGELES RESEARCH GROUP ——



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FOREWORD

Today, it's a fairly uncontested position among Marxists-Leninists-Maoists worldwide to not only uphold the struggle for LGBT rights but also to be an actor in the struggle. However, this hasn't always been the case.

The social movements around LGBT rights can be traced to the early 50s, when in the United States so-called "homophile" organizations were formed to address issues of discrimination in medical treatment. In the late 60s, and particularly after the Stonewall Riots in 1969, a radical movement (that took the name of "Gay Liberation") emerged, parallel to other radical struggles such as the Black Power movement, the Anti-War movement, and the Women's movement.

Although the struggle grew, most of the anti-revisionist movement was absent from it. Worse, most of these organizations openly and publicly opposed it, using the same rationale and words of reactionaries.

A Different Reaction in Semi-Colonies

There is not a unique decade for the LGBT movement's development in semi-colonial countries; the struggle first appeared in Latin America in the 80s—which explains why this continent has the most progressive laws on the question in the "third-world"—and in Asia in the 90s (although

the movement is still marginal in Africa). But the reaction of the most advanced Maoist parties in those regions was the opposite to those of their counterparts in imperialist countries.

The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) addressed the question during the Central Committee's Tenth Plenum in 1992, recognizing the right to form same-sex relationships and changing one's gender. The CPP was the first Communist Party in Asia to address and uphold this position. Red Areas controlled by the Party began officiating and celebrating gay marriage in 2005—practices that continue to be banned in unliberated areas in the country.

Generally, Maoist organizations in semi-colonies based their analysis and struggle on class rather than identity. For instance, imprisoned members of the Communist Party of Peru stated in an interview in 1994 that “party membership is open to all who support the cause of communist revolution and the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, Gonzalo Thought, regardless of what their sexual preferences may be.”

The hegemony of those Parties over the Left in their countries meant that the situation did not require them to defend their line from a theoretical standpoint. This, in turn, resulted in a lack of theoretical interventions on the LGBT question.

Notable Exceptions

Despite this unequal development, there were some, albeit sparse, efforts in imperialist countries to criticize the dominant homophobic line. *Towards a Scientific Analysis of the Gay Question* was such an effort.¹ Written with a rigorous and exacting dialectical materialist methodology and originally published in the *Guardian* (a progressive newspaper that published many articles from the New Left in the US), it was signed only as the “Los Angeles Research Group”—a name that anonymised its authors.

Today we still are not certain who the authors are. However, their detailed knowledge of the Revolutionary Union (later RCP-USA) and October League policies that they criticize points to the likelihood that the authors were part of or close to those organizations and chose to remain anonymous. Such cases were not uncommon: Kasama Project’s *Out of the Red Closet* published in 2012 showed that there were many comrades who chose to stay silent during those times, because they were afraid that coming out would lead to their expulsion; they were deeply committed to their organizations, which they believed were waging revolu-

¹ Black Panther Party’s Huey Newton’s speech in 1970 on The Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements is another instance; it was firm and nuanced in its stance but its short form did not provide the deep, thorough analysis of this essay.

tionary struggles.

Theoretical Terrain of the LGBT Struggle

Thus, because of the scarcity of texts such as this, coupled with the reactionary lines of the main communist organizations, the LGBT movements in imperialist countries marched steadily towards post-modernism.

In more recent times, the emergence of a younger generation of Maoists in imperialist countries led to closer examination of the LGBT struggle, inspired by the advanced practice in semi-colonial countries. However, the void in Marxist theory oriented many of them instead towards post-modernism.

Our intention in publishing this text is to give broader access to these comrades' work—work that goes beyond rejection, beyond simply criticizing a wrong line. Regardless of their names, these “approximately ten communists who are gay women,” as they called themselves, undertook the specific task of dispassionately deconstructing and refuting the reactionary Revolutionary Union's position paper on “Homosexuality and Gay Liberation” (see appendix), but also giving a dialectical materialist articulation of Marxist theory on the “Gay Question.” Their contribution remains relevant today, at a time when the debate on this question is still mainly focused on the rejection of post-modern elements (which sometimes leads to

reactionary positions such as rejecting the struggle of trans people), rather than the scientific and materialist methodology and analysis that is the very core and strength of our ideology.

As J. Moufawad-Paul writes, “Since [Marxism-Leninism-Maoism] is only a few decades old... it had [has] not yet produced a series of philosophical interventions aimed at clarifying its theoretical terrain.” We believe that the road to formulating a proletarian LGBT line must be made by philosophical interventions to clarify what comrades in semi-colonial countries have achieved in practice and extract what is universally applicable—and wrest the discourse away from the post-modern notions of self and identity, towards scientific, materialist analysis rooted in class struggle.

Our hope in republishing this 1975 text—which made a significant contribution towards that aim—will, as the authors hoped, encourage others to “study and... take up this work.”

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INTRODUCTION

We are a group of approximately ten communists who are gay women. We have come together because we are increasingly concerned with and disturbed by the spreading and consolidation of an anti-gay line which is expressed organizationally by the refusal to allow gays membership in communist organizations. Although this line has reached its clearest expression through such organizations as the Revolutionary Union (RU) and the October League (OL), its influence is certainly not limited to these organizations. We feel that particularly in this period of rising political struggle concerning the building of a party, it is extremely important that this question be met head on and struggled with. The approach taken toward resolving this question will indeed reflect the way that the communist forces deal with finding the correct line in other important questions. Incorrect thinking does not stay confined to one neat little area, but spills over into all other political struggle in that it reflects an overall approach to political questions.

We found the most concrete expression of this incorrect line on the gay question in a paper the RU wrote for the Attica Brigade. While the RU disavows this paper as an official document, our experience has shown that the arguments used in that paper are the basis for the anti-gay line put forward by all the other communist forces who

espouse that line. Thus, we are using their paper as a vehicle for combatting that line and the incorrect assumptions and arguments it is based on. Our criticisms of the RU paper are therefore not limited to the RU, but are extended to all such evidence of this incorrect line within the communist movement.

The purpose of this paper is to refute the incorrect analyses that are dominant today in the communist movement. As such, it is a polemic. We realize that a correct line emerges and is developed in the process of summing up practice, analyzing history, and in struggling against incorrect analyses. This paper is a beginning of that process. Our purpose at this time is not to put forth a complete analysis of our own on all aspects of gayness. Our investigation and study on the gay question is incomplete. However, we do have a clear perspective from which we have approached the question. Our experience and practice lead us to believe the gay question is integrally and structurally tied to the woman question, and the key to the resolution of both is found in the division of labor between the sexes. The nuclear family as an economic unit with its corresponding super-structural aspects has been, since the introduction of class society, the great perpetrator of the division of labor between the sexes, to the benefit of the ruling classes. Until this division of labor is broken down, by the introduction of women into production, and social and

political life on an equal basis with men, and by the socialization of the functions of women within the nuclear family with respect to the reproduction and maintenance of labor power, there will be oppression of women and oppression of gay people.

Because of our limited experience, this paper concentrates more on lesbians than gay men. However, our position that it is politically incorrect to exclude people who agree on ideological, political and organizational questions from communist organizations solely because of a person's sexuality clearly holds for both gay women and men. Our conclusion is based not so much on our experience as lesbian communists but from applying Marxist methodology. Consequently, anyone utilizing the same method of investigation, be they gay or heterosexual, should arrive at the same conclusion.

We are going to proceed with our study and hope that others, too, will take up this work. We think that this paper establishes conclusively that the exclusion of comrades from communist organizations of the basis of sexuality is incorrect. We specifically invite struggle over this question and hope that people will communicate their ideas and criticisms to us.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PRINTING

The response to this paper has been much greater than we had anticipated, so we are reprinting it again to meet the demand. We have learned much since the paper was first put out, both from feedback on the paper, and from our own development as communists. So we are using this introduction to clarify certain points in the paper, and to correct errors which still appear in the text.

We said in the paper that the process in which we arrive at incorrect ideas does not just stay confined to one area, but spills over into other areas. This is because incorrect ideas or conclusions are usually a reflection of an incorrect approach to a question. Marxist-Leninists are scientists. They use the Marxist line of cognition and method of analysis to approach all questions. Marxist-Leninists start from a thorough and concrete investigation of concrete conditions, and, moving from perceptions and observations to rational conclusions drawn from numerous perceptions, try to discover and interpret the laws of relations within and between phenomena—to see how things work and how they can be affected. They then test out their conclusions in social practice.

Take the example of Marxist-Leninists who are faced with the problem of crossing a river. First they investigate. They measure the current, width, depth of the river. Then they weigh this against the

materials at hand, the strength of forces or extent of resources available to the task and the speed in which they need to get to the other side. They know from summed up past practice (theory) that this is important to do, that these factors influence which of the historically tested methods of crossing (building bridges, a raft or boat, swimming, etc.) to apply to the task. Then they test out the method they have selected. If it doesn't work, the next time they'll know that as well, and that information will be added to the knowledge they bring to the situation at hand.

Marxist-Leninists strive to apply the science of dialectical and historical materialism (ideology) to every question, to every problem. We say that political line is a reflection of ideological line, since particular solutions to particular questions (political line) are derived from the way these questions are looked at, analyzed, interpreted, and acted on. So, for example, if a group comes to a position on the gay question based on feelings, or suppositions, or moralisms, instead of by doing a concrete investigation of the question, then that group's position cannot be correct—unless if by luck. And if that group sees nothing wrong with their approach to this one question and does not apply the fundamental laws of Marxism-Leninism to it, then they are certain to repeat the same mistakes in other questions. Why would a group intentionally approach one question differently from all other

questions? (If they did, and if they did so intentionally, then this is a clear ideological deviation to make an exception of the gay question.)

We think that within the Marxist-Leninist movement as it currently exists, there are differences in the extent to which different organizations practice Marxism-Leninism. It is a young movement which makes mistakes because of incorrect approaches to political questions, approaches which are sometimes not materialist, not dialectical and not historical. Certainly this is true of these organizations' approaches to the gay question. If these organizations were to be judged solely on their approaches to and conclusions on the gay question, we would say that they do not practice Marxism-Leninism at all. However, it is important to note that they do not approach all questions as they do the gay question. And that is why we think it is important to struggle with them over their approach to this question.

This central ideological problem not only applies to young Marxist-Leninist organizations. Others, such as NAM, who conclude as we do that gays should not be excluded from communist organizations, also suffer from the same ideological weakness. Their opposite conclusion comes from the same lack of investigation, the same lack of application of scientific principles and laws. So, even though we agree with their conclusion on this particular issue, we do not think that their

approach is correct. We have seen the effects of this incorrect and unscientific approach on their stands on other questions. They have failed to apply the universal laws of Marxism-Leninism to other issues (like party-building), and so their conclusions have been incorrect. As we said, lack of investigation in one area usually corresponds to a similar lack in other areas. We cannot and do not assume general unity with them based only on conclusionary unity on a particular question. This would indeed be false unity.

The second point we need to clarify is our view of where we as Marxist-Leninists should focus our organizing. Historical materialism teaches us that the only consistently revolutionary class is the working class; and that without the leadership of a proletarian party with a correct line, the working class cannot succeed in its revolutionary aim. Because of this, we see building that party and working among the proletariat, organizing workers, to be our primary task. And the primary place for doing that organizing is in the workplace where the contradiction between the worker and the capitalist is the clearest. It is as workers that we have the power to lead and make a successful socialist revolution. It is as workers that we can learn and prove how socialized production creates the unity of the multi-national working class and the solidarity of all workers, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual. Thus we think that the

correct way to organize gays is primarily as workers, and not as part of a separate gay community. Gays should be organized in the same ways and into the same organizations as all other workers – at the workplace.

It is also in the workplace that Marxist-Leninists can best undergo the process of developing proletarian ideology and proletarian class stand which will enable us to sharply struggle against the dominant strains of bourgeois ideology and where we can best test and develop our political line. We have seen historically, in the CPUSA, the errors of the CP not consolidating organizationally in the working class, of the CP not being rooted in the proletariat. Both their ideology and their political line suffered from it. Unless a communist party is integrated into the working class and unless it is guided by a correct ideological and political line developed from the perspective of the working class, there can be no successful revolution, since it is the working class that is the motive force in history.

Based on these reasons, we seriously disagree with organizations who base their political work solely in a particular community or who work solely around a particular issue. Gay liberation organizations and mass organizations of gays are important, but are not the place where gay communists should place their primary efforts and resources. This is because we do not yet have in

this country a communist party which is capable of leading, coordinating and giving direction to struggles in the mass movement—be it the women's movement, the gay rights movement, or the national minorities' movement. We do not have an anti-revisionist communist party which is rooted in the working class, which has sufficiently transformed its world outlook to that of the proletariat, and which has developed a political line to fit the conditions of the US. Until we have such a party, and until such a party is consolidated, our task must be to build it, and to build it primarily at the workplace, by developing strong communist leadership at the workplace and building strong ties with advanced workers at the workplace so that we can have a genuine communist party of the working class. In other words, until a party is formed and until advanced workers have been consolidated around the leadership of the party and its correct line, our task is to win the advanced workers to communism and the party. It is only after this has been done that communists, under the direction of the party, should put their primary energies into developing and working within the mass movement, including the movement for democratic rights for gays.

There are three specific points we want to clarify in response to criticism we received of the paper.

1. The weakest areas of our paper were those in which we attempted to put forward affirmative

analyses instead of refuting incorrect ones. Specifically, our section on Material Oppression of gays is the weakest part of the paper, although we recognize that this is the most crucial element in a scientific understanding of the question.

We have not sufficiently developed the relationship between the gay question and the woman question. Although it seems that historically gay oppression is tied in time and place to the development of private property, the division of labor and resulting inequality between men and women, and the development of sex roles, further investigation needs to be done to prove that historical relationship and the conclusions which flow from it.

Similarly, our analysis of the role of the bourgeois nuclear family is weak. We see that there are both negative and positive aspects of the family, but we do not say which is dominant and at which historical periods. This again reflects our limitations and is a weakness in the paper. Another major weakness is that we do not provide a definition of "gayness." We do not suggest whether and to what extent gayness is a biological trait that people are born with, or an acquired, societal trait.

We see these three major theoretical weaknesses not only as our own, but as reflective of major historical theoretical weaknesses in the communist movement of which we are a part. However, the hard work of researching and investigating these questions has begun. People are beginning to find

data on these subjects from pre-historic times to the present, focusing on the extent to which gayness existed, was allowed to exist, or encouraged, and on the nature and extent of oppression of gays at different historical periods. Research is being done on the role of biology and of society in the definition of “gayness.” It is this historical and scientific lack of information that makes our paper incomplete—and that also makes the anti-gay analysis incorrect from a strictly scientific standpoint. The struggle for a complete, correct line on the gay question will be protracted and will not be resolved overnight with scanty, perceptual and superficial information. We are glad that there are now communists who are taking the task seriously.

2. In our discussion on page 65 of the Soviet Union’s dramatic reversal in the 1930s (the passing of laws and policy which outlawed abortion and homosexuality and which provided material incentives and support for the increased production of children), we did not mean to imply that this was a correct tact for the party to have taken. Rather, we see these acts as mechanical approaches to complex and serious problems. We think that those acts instituted by the party at that time sold short the role of the masses, in that they opted for rigid laws and material, economic incentives instead of mass education and persuasion. They did not bring the theory behind the problems to the people, but laid down the “solutions” to the

problems. They used capitalist means of meeting the real needs of reproducing the working class, rather than developing socialist methods of resolving the contradiction. We see this approach as incorrect. We used the example, however, to show that communists must solve problems based on the analysis of concrete historical conditions. To equate the conditions of the USSR in the 1930s with those of the US in the 1970s is incorrect. We think that this is what some of the new communist groups have done with respect to the gay question.

3. Finally, we stress again the main point of this paper: we believe that one's class stand and world outlook determines whether one is truly a proletarian revolutionary. Neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality is a substitute for or a test of one's class stand. This paper shows why.

CHAPTER 1. METHODOLOGY

Before addressing the specific content of anti-gay arguments, we will outline our understanding of Marxist methodology which communists utilize to arrive at a correct analysis of a problem.

Marxist methodology is first and foremost a world outlook, the essence of Marxism-Leninism. It is dialectical materialism: the way by which communists understand and change the world. It is a tool, a guide to action in the service of the proletariat. It is not neutral, and teaches that it is not enough to simply understand the world, but that an understanding must be put to use to change the world according to the class interests of the proletariat. Using Marxist methodology means having, and putting to use, a proletarian world outlook.

The science of Marxism begins with the thorough investigation of concrete conditions; we proceed from objective and historical reality, rather than subjective wishes or preconceived notions.

We cannot know something superficially and expect to arrive at a proper analysis; we must deal with phenomena in both the general and the particular; we must know the basic characteristics, trends and development of a thing in its particular historical period, and must not look at a thing in isolation. We cannot come to rash conclusions when a situation is still unclear; we must oppose carelessness and stress meticulousness; we cannot

be satisfied with a one-sided approach. We cannot merely outline the appearance of a thing, but must get to its essence by grasping its principal contradiction.

We must “appropriate the material in detail, analyze its different forms of development and trace out their inner connections. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described.”¹ Marxism, then, is a science, and the scientific method means an honest seeking of truth from concrete facts, not the raising of one’s personal feelings to the level of theory or line.

To arrive at a correct analysis, a communist must derive theory from practice, using the tools of dialectical and historical materialism. We must not be content to formulate and act upon hypotheses that fit our notion of what should be, but by doing work among the masses, learn what is. Out of many experiences general ideas and calls to action can be found, using the Marxist-Leninist method of investigation to pick out contradictions and tendencies of development. These generalizations must be tested in practice and what is learned from that must again be summed up to form the basis for new directions which will push our practice even further.

To combat subjectivism we must propagate

¹ K. Marx, “Afterword to the Second German Edition” in *Capital*, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1963, p. 19.

materialism and dialectics.... Communists must always go into the whys and wherefores of anything, use their own heads and carefully think over whether or not it corresponds to reality and is really well founded; on no account should they follow blindly and encourage slavishness.²

We must remember that in developing a political line, a correct ideological approach is key. “The Marxist line of cognition is the ideological foundation of the political line of the proletarian party. At the same time, it serves the political line. Without a correct line of cognition, therefore, it would be impossible to formulate and implement a correct political line.”³

It is imperative that we learn to apply the theory of Marxism-Leninism to all questions and problems that confront us. To fail to learn and utilize this scientific method will cause us to lose our bearings, become adrift, and retard the development of the revolutionary struggle led by the working class.

We must remember the fundamental insight that society is changed through the development and resolution of its own internal contradictions at

² Mao Zedong, “Rectify the Party’s Style of Work” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. III, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 37.

³ Jiang Han, “Great Benefits Derive from a Good Analysis”, *Peking Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 50, p. 12.

any historical period. The primary contradiction, that which controls the resolution of all others, is that between the socialized forces of production and the private appropriation of wealth, the contradiction between classes.

It is with this methodology and world outlook that we read and assess the RU and other anti-gay analyses. We ask: where is their investigation and study? Where is their historical and material evidence? Such questions should be kept in mind throughout the rest of this paper. We have found that the RU has systematically abandoned Marxist methodology and proletarian ideology throughout their analysis, and that their line is consequently incorrect.

CHAPTER 2. IS GAYNESS A RESPONSE TO DECAYING IMPERIALISM?

The basic premise of the RU's position on gay people is stated in their unsupported assertion that:

[H]omosexuality in the US today is an individual response to the intensification of the contradictions brought about by decaying imperialism: in particular, it is a response to the contradiction between men and women which is rooted in male supremacist institutions and male chauvinist ideology [see Appendix 2].

The fact is that homosexuality has existed in all historical periods, it has been socially accepted and even encouraged in societies prior to capitalism (for example, in primitive communist societies such as the Iroquois and Mojaves). If, as Marxist-Leninists, we know that imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism, then homosexuality in pre-capitalist societies clearly was not a response to decaying imperialism, which had not yet historically occurred.

The unsupported statement that “homosexuality is a response—consciously or not—to a male supremacist society” has no basis in historical fact. (The October League has similarly asserted that homosexuality arises in periods of societal decay

and in times of extraordinarily severe oppression of women.) The truth is that homosexuality existed in matriarchal societies in which male supremacy was not dominant (such as the Philippines before the Spanish invasions of the 16th century). Thus gayness existed in periods of female dominance or periods in which women were highly respected, and not just in times of heavy oppression of women. Looking to U.S. history, the pre-Civil War period in the south was a period of great oppression of women, but there is not recorded a corresponding rise in gayness.

The RU seems to base all gay relationships on a response to male supremacy and chauvinism, and the increased alienation under decaying capitalism. Although it is true that capitalism intensifies alienation in all members of society, particularly the working class and petit-bourgeoisie, it does not follow simply that alienation is the source of sexual relations, be they heterosexual or homosexual.

What scientific and historical evidence is presented to support the contention that gayness is an individual response to the contradictions of decaying imperialism? Absolutely none. Or, are we to believe that the RU feels such a statement is just “naturally” true and needs no backing? As communists and gays, we disagree. We are aware of the many “natural” ideas that the bourgeoisie tries to pass off as true. The RU recognizes this when

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they correctly state in their *Draft Programme* that the ideas and outlook of the capitalists, and other exploiting classes which have ruled society for thousands of years, have become deeply entrenched in society, and have largely acquired the “force of habit.” The bourgeoisie takes advantage of this to promote the so-called “theory of human nature,” which says that people are basically selfish and will never change, so socialism is bound to fail and communism is a hopeless Utopia.

This bourgeois “theory” is age-old garbage. There is no such thing as “human nature” in the abstract, divorced from classes.

In the slave system, it was considered “natural” for one group of people, the slave-owners, to own other people, the slaves. In capitalist society, this idea is regarded as criminal and absurd, because the bourgeoisie has no need for slaves as private property (at least not in its own country). But it has every need for wage-slaves, proletarians. So it presents as “natural” the kind of society where a small group, the capitalists, own the means of production and on that basis force the great majority of society to work to enrich them.⁴

First, as we have shown, the RU and others offer no evidence that gayness is a “response” either to decaying imperialism or male supremacy and chauvinism. Further, to label something merely as

⁴ Revolutionary Union, *Draft Programme*, pp. 12-13.

a “response” suggests a linear analysis of history rather than a dialectical approach.

Second, it is a mistake to focus on response and label it negative. Take for instance, the historical phenomena of capitalism and imperialism. Class struggle and wars of national liberation are “responses” we support and participate in. Class collaboration is also a “response”; it is a response to be isolated and defeated. Thus it is insufficient to dismiss a phenomenon as a “response” and as such label it negative. What is key is the form it takes—whose class interests it advances. Class collaboration is an incorrect “response” to bourgeois rule because it perpetuates the bourgeoisie at the expense of the working class. Class struggle and wars of national liberation support the interests of the international proletariat.

We assume the RU labels gayness not only a “response” but an incorrect one. However, no real evidence is presented as to how or why gayness retards class struggle. Heterosexuality, in and of itself, is neither progressive nor reactionary. Homosexuality, in and of itself, is neither progressive nor reactionary. It is not sexuality which determines class stands, it is the world outlook people bring to their relationships and work.

Our limited study and experience lead us to believe the question of why people are gay is much too complex to be dealt with in such a facile and subjective way as “it’s a response.” With a method-

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ological approach as unscientific and un-Marxist as the above, we will never develop the correct lines necessary to build a revolutionary working-class movement, nor a party which represents the organized advanced detachment of the working class to lead the socialist revolution in this country.

CHAPTER 3. IS GAYNESS A REFLECTION OF PETIT-BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY?

Following from the RU's main premise is the thrust of their anti-gay line which is that gayness is a manifestation of (petit) bourgeois ideology, and not proletarian ideology, and that this is reflected in several aspects of gayness. Let's examine these.

A. Ideology

The RU says "homosexuality is an ideology of the petit-bourgeoisie." First, this is an incorrect and unscientific use of terms. Marxists must be careful and precise in using words, since the point of the science is to clarify, and not muddle up our thinking and analysis. Ideology is a reflection of class; it is a world outlook. In the world today two classes are competing for power: the capitalist (bourgeoisie) and the working class (proletariat). There are two world outlooks, two competing ideologies.

The ideology of the bourgeoisie is the ideas and world view which expresses and supports their class interests. It serves to maintain the rule of the bourgeoisie (the private ownership of the means of production, natural resources, etc.) and justify imperialism. In the capitalist world its ideology is dominant and is perpetuated by bourgeois institutions (political, judicial, mass media, education, etc.).

The second and rising ideology is that of the proletariat, the revolutionary working class. Its world outlook is Marxism-Leninism, the theory and practice of socialist revolution; it recognizes the labor theory of value and proletarian internationalism.

Although in capitalist society there are middle classes between the bourgeoisie and the working class, there is no third ideology. Caught between the two major classes, the petit bourgeois reflects aspects of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As people who sell, trade, socially mix with and aspire to become part of the bourgeoisie, and fear being pushed into the working class, many petit-bourgeoisie identify with or support the bourgeoisie and its dominant (at this time in the U.S.) ideology. On the other hand, as people who work and do not own the major means of production, people who are being pushed into the working class, the petit bourgeoisie are open ideologically to the working class. They are potential allies of the working class and can be won to proletarian leadership and the struggle against capitalism.

It is their social and economic position between the two dominant classes (neither capitalist nor working class), the fact that they are neither the ruling and expropriating class, nor the exploited and revolutionary class, that historically leads to petit-bourgeois types of thinking (empiricism and subjectivism) and behavior (vacillation, individu-

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alism, opportunism, and tailism).

To use “ideology” as the RU does one would have to say that in general individual love relationships in this society are an ideology of the petit bourgeoisie. But it is ridiculous to speak of an individual relationship as an “ideology.” Sexual relationships exist and will exist in all societies, primitive, feudal, capitalist, communist. What is true is that such relationships will be marked by the ruling ideology of that society. Homosexuality is no more an ideology than heterosexuality is.

B. Escape

Having made the unsupported statement that gayness is a response to male supremacy and decaying imperialism, the RU goes further to characterize this response as turning “its back to the struggle between men and women,” and as “premised upon the unwillingness to struggle with the opposite sex in very important relationships.” Further, “Lesbianism is... an *escape* from male chauvinism; male homosexuality reinforces male chauvinism in its refusal to deal with relationships with women.” (emphasis theirs) These characterizations run into several problems.

As communists we struggle against male chauvinism and supremacy in our places of work, school, mass and communist organizations, among friends and comrades. Love relationships are not the source of male chauvinism and supremacy;

rather, like all aspects of life under capitalist class relations and culture they merely reflect the reality of class divisions. No individual relationship under capitalism is, per se, a relationship in which people struggle against male chauvinism. Consciousness must be brought to it.

Therefore, as communists, we know that male supremacy and male chauvinism will not disappear through men and women struggling in individual love relationships. We believe the oppression of women can only begin to be resolved when a firm material basis has been laid by a socialist revolution, led by the working class and its party, resulting in the dictatorship of the proletariat.

In other words, we see mass collective working-class struggle as key and primary to the ending of women's oppression, and individual struggle in love relationships as decidedly secondary and supportive. To make a blanket assertion that gays turn their back on the "struggle between men and women" is to deny the dual nature of the struggle, i.e., its mass character which is primary, and its individual character which is secondary.

Second, the RU does not say gayness is an "attempt" to "escape" from male chauvinism, but that it is an "escape," a turning away from struggle. We don't think it is splitting hairs to pick up on this. Such a view reflects an idealistic conception of the dominance and pervasiveness of male supremacy and chauvinism in an advanced capitalist soci-

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ety. The fact is that no one – male or female – can “escape” male chauvinism and supremacy in a capitalist society. Capitalism needs and perpetuates them; they are integral to the socialization of both men and women in the workplace, at home, and in the community. Male supremacy is not such a weak, isolated part of bourgeois ideology that a person can “escape” by merely changing who they relate to. Concrete experience shows that gays, particularly gay women, must still confront male supremacy and chauvinism at work, in school, on the street, in political organizations, wherever they are.

Indeed, not only is homosexuality not an “escape,” but the oppression by male chauvinism and supremacy increases. The bourgeoisie uses male supremacy and chauvinism to whip up anti-gay prejudice to further divide the working class. When gay women are told that what they really need is a “good fuck” it is not totally unanalogous to the chauvinist idea that every woman secretly yearns to be raped, that “no” means “yes” or that a “good fuck” will cure a woman of frigidity. Nor is it surprising that a woman who is strong and assertive, or intelligent and competent, or athletic, may be called a lesbian to intimidate her into a more “suitable” role, i.e., passive and supportive. People will wonder if a man is gay if he is gentle or soft-spoken, or into art or poetry, or not bragging about the women he’s had, because he is not acting

like a “man” but as a “woman.” Indeed, one of the initial strong points of the gay liberation movement was its recognition that it must fight not only anti-gayness but the oppression of women in general.

Finally, we are struck by the consistently negative, one-sided way that the RU views gay relationships. In fact, their view of gayness as an “unwillingness” to relate to, or as an “escape” from the opposite sex, closely reflects the bourgeois sociologists and psychologists view that gayness is “unnatural” or an “inability” to relate to a person of the opposite sex. We think it is important to look at the other side of the coin: gayness is the ability to relate to a person of the same sex. This is not an idealist approach but a dialectical one.

We believe that the gross and consistent negativism of the RU concerning gays comes more from their own subjectivism than any correct concern with petit-bourgeois individualism. Marxist methodology teaches us we must study conditions conscientiously and proceed from objective reality, not from subjective wishes; we must learn to get to the essence of phenomena and not be satisfied with appearance.

C. Individual Choice

The RU seems particularly concerned with the negative aspects of the individuality of gay women, particularly those in the women’s movement:

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“These are women who... wouldn’t or couldn’t deal with men in their personal relationships.” But if we look at this dialectically, lesbianism *per se*, does not necessarily mean rejection of men. It can and often does say something affirmative about a woman’s relations with women. It is not necessarily a question of “couldn’t” or “wouldn’t” but may also be that a woman could relate to another woman.

This is not to deny that there are gay women who enter gay relationships because of negative sexual experiences with men; there are also gay women who express strong anti-male feelings. However, there are many gay women who do not. By mentioning only the former, RU’s conclusion is one-sided. Similarly, it is one-sided to focus only on gay women who voice anti-male sentiments, and ignore the countless heterosexual women who express equally strong anti-male comments and actions. Likewise, the actions of many heterosexual men exhibit disrespect for women and anti-female attitudes of which rape is only an extreme example.

Anti-male sentiments expressed by gay and heterosexual women (and anti-female actions and feelings of gay and heterosexual men) reflect the appearance of things; the essence is the material oppression of women and sexism under capitalism. The key point to understand is that the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (and its ideology)

has oppressed women. Consequently, there is at present a contradiction between women and men. Communists, gay or heterosexual, seek to resolve this contradiction (1) by recognizing that the material conditions to end the oppression of women can exist only under a socialist economy and (2) by working to unite all who can be united to fight both for the full democratic rights of women and for socialism.

Bourgeois ideology, in its attempt to divide the working class, has worked to keep women fighting and competing with each other. The crushing pressure first to “get that man” and then to “keep that man,” proofs of a “real woman,” makes women suspicious of and fighting other women, rather than uniting and fighting the real enemy, imperialism.

The women’s movement has shown that there is more to unite women, particularly working-class women, than to keep us fighting each other. Through common political struggle and practice deep friendships form. Some of these have become sexual, not so much from a refusal to deal with men, but rather from the realization that women are also people with whom meaningful relationships can be had. For professed Marxist-Leninists to read into women loving women a rejection of men reflects the bourgeois ideology that a woman is not happy or fulfilled without a man, that women in their primary relationship should love

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a man more than a woman, that men are superior to women. It is a one-sided approach.

This rejection theory also hints at the subjective fears and threats felt by men conditioned by a male chauvinist and supremacist society, when confronted by women who do not rely on them. To the RU however, "Such a choice is clearly individualistic; it says: *I* have a right to relate the way *I* want to, *I* can do what *I* want with *my* body." We are confused by the RU's indignation at a woman saying she has a right to relate how she wants, or that she has a right to control what happens to her body. If a woman refuses to continue to relate to a man who constantly beats and humiliates her is she being individualistic? How about a woman who decides she wants an abortion? Do we not support a woman who refuses to be sterilized or used as a guinea pig for an experimental IUD or birth control for individualistically deciding what she wants to do with her body? What subjective prejudices is the RU operating under here?

We agree with the concept that a person's individual needs are secondary to the needs of the revolutionary struggle. We also believe that socialist revolution is the start of the resolution of the contradictions between socialized labor and private ownership and the oppression that comes from that contradiction. This implies a respect for the individual that is lacking under the rule of capital.

D. Individual Solutions

Moving right along, the RU says because gays “are forced to live on the periphery of society... insofar as their relationships are subject to public abuse, therefore, such relationships can be only individual solutions to the contradictions of imperialism...” and what “makes it individual and not progressive—is not that it is done alone... but that it does not engage the masses of people in struggle, it doesn’t organize or set the basis for organizing masses of people to fight around their needs.” Further, “because we put class struggle first, we are opposed to all relationships which are seen by the people in them as the main source of their well-being, or as a source of personal salvation.”

Has the RU ever talked to a gay person, or indeed to any of the people they work with? The fact is, some gay people see their relationships as the primary source of their well-being, and some heterosexual people do. No communist—gay or heterosexual—sees personal relationships as the solution to the contradictions of imperialism. Sexual relationships—heterosexual or homosexual—do not challenge the power of the monopoly capitalists, or per se “move the struggle of the working class forward.” To say otherwise is pure metaphysics. There is nothing magical about heterosexual relationships that gives them “natural” claim to healthy, principled relationships, just as there is

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nothing magical about homosexual relationships that makes them “naturally” messed up. Some relationships strengthen the persons involved so they can engage in class struggle; others deplete energy and encourage backward ideas. Relationships are not absolute “things-in-themselves.”

It is precisely one of the functions of bourgeois ideology to promote the idea that there is a wall between productive life (work) and personal life. We are told, in a thousand different ways, that while the wages we receive from our work give us the means to live, it is only at home, in our relationships, in the family, at the beach or in the mountains, that we really “live.” And for most of the people in this country, their individual personal relationships and time away from work are the only bright spots in their day-to-day lives. It is our task as communists to break down this artificial barrier and reintegrate productive life with personal life.

As presently constituted most relationships in this society, gay and heterosexual, “do not set the basis for organizing people to fight for their needs.” As Communists, we cannot deal with personal relationships in the abstract, divorced from concrete realities. The concrete reality in the U.S. today is that personal relationships have a contradictory role. On the one hand, personal relationships (and the nuclear family) are used by the bourgeoisie to mask the real contradictions in

society and to perpetuate bourgeois ideology (e.g. sex roles). On the other hand, personal relationships (and the nuclear family) are indeed one of the primary sources of people's enjoyment and give them the strength and will to go on. As communists we must deal with these contradictions in our work. It is not enough to raise grand slogans of "Defend the family." We must educate the working class as to the dual role of relationships and the nuclear family and lead their struggle against what is negative and strengthen what is positive. We must help them tear down the wall between production and personal life. The working class needs political consciousness and understanding, not just slogans. To do otherwise is outright mechanism and denies the role of consciousness.

E. Periphery of Society

Not only are gays individualistic, says the RU, but they are outside "the mainstream of society" because they are the "subject of public abuse." This is nonsense and the RU knows it. If gays are indeed "forced to live on the periphery of society," then they have a lot of company: communists, minorities, undocumented workers, unmarried couples, military deserters and draft resisters, prisoners, etc., are also subject to public abuse. RU's frequently mentioned rural commune may be on the "periphery" of society, but that is not where most gay people are. Gays are next to you at work,

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at school, in the supermarket, in Mayday committees and party-building forums, in other political work. They are assembly-line workers, steel and rubber workers, hospital workers, students, electricians, teachers, lawyers, unemployed, mothers and fathers. The vast majority of gay people, like the vast majority of people in this country, are workers, and even the bourgeoisie doesn't have the stupidity to characterize workers as peripheral to society.

Who a person has a relationship with does not mystically transport them to another world. Nor will the RU's wishful thinking. To determine one's position in society by sexuality merely reflects the dominant bourgeois society's obsession with sex. To say sexuality is the determining factor of one's world outlook or politics is to say that sexuality is the primary contradiction, which ignores the fundamental Marxist insight that "changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society, that is, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between classes and the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that pushes society forward and gives impetus for the supercession of the old society by the new."⁵ We

⁵ Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction" in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. I, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 286.

must make a concrete analysis of the classes in our society. As a general rule one's class position and class outlook will determine one's revolutionary potential. Gay people cross class lines; it will be their class position and class outlook, not their sexuality, which will govern their stand on socialist revolution. Working class gays, as all workers, "have a potentially inexhaustible enthusiasm for socialism."⁶

Just as gays are not limited to any class, they are not limited to a single race or nationality as some "communists" would pretend.

We do not pretend that the working class is wildly enthusiastic about gay people at this time. Workers, in general are not presently enchanted with communists either. Both are subject to much public abuse. Bourgeois ideology and propaganda have seen to this.

But why... does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of the least resistance, lead to the domination of the bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that the bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than the socialist ideology; because it is more fully developed and because it possesses immeasurably more opportunities for being spread. And the younger the

⁶ Mao Zedong, "Editor's Notes from *Socialist Upsurge in China's Countryside*" in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. V, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 228.

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socialist movement is in any given country, the more vigorously must it fight against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more strongly must the workers be warned against those bad counsellors who shout against “overrating the conscious element,” etc.⁷

Workers and communists, like all people in this society, have picked up bourgeois baggage that they must now struggle to rid themselves of. This baggage, including the reactionary weapons of white and male supremacy and chauvinism, is not rational or beneficial for the working class because it only serves to keep us from uniting to overthrow capitalist, imperialist exploitation.

Anti-gayness is another form of bourgeois baggage. The bourgeoisie has said that Blacks are criminal, primitive, inferior, oversexed, have natural rhythm; Black men are out to rape white women or steal your job; Blacks are always on welfare, they're lazy and shiftless; women are weak and helpless and need a man to lean on; they have a natural maternal instinct; men are strong and brave and don't cry; gays are sick, they're perverted, unnatural, they molest children, ad nauseam. We know this bourgeois garbage well because we have to struggle against all of it every day at work and

⁷ V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 44.

among our comrades.

But it seems that while some comrades think the working class can handle communism and the fight against white and male chauvinism and supremacy, it can't handle gayness so we will just tail after the workers on this one. When the anti-gay jokes fly, we'll just laugh too and show the workers how much like them we are. It's not important anyway, so why make it any harder on ourselves?

But let's look at this attitude in light of what Lenin said on the issue of the spontaneity of the masses and communist consciousness: "But what was not a great misfortune became a real misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim... when people—even Social Democratic organs—appeared who were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a theoretical basis for the slavish cringing before spontaneity."⁸

It is our belief, based on concrete practice, that the RU's attitude in fact belittles the working class and its ability to recognize bourgeois ideology for what it is. As communists we must surely believe that people are not static but instead can change and move forward. Indeed, our concrete experience as workers has shown us that the people we work with are often more tolerant and willing

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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to listen and struggle and change their attitudes than are many of our comrades. The process of “coming out” to co-workers may indeed be difficult and painful because of deep-rooted anti-gay prejudices, but the struggle and the resulting higher level of trust, respect, friendship and unity that often occur has been worth it. To struggle and share with a co-worker, and to later hear them say they were glad we told them and talked about it, can only reaffirm our faith in the working class as the true revolutionary class. An exemplary indication of this was the “Green Ban” strike (a strike over a non-economic issue) by an Australian building construction local to defend the right of a gay professor to teach at the university.

F. Strains and Self-Indulgence

As communists we recognize that it is difficult and takes a good deal of time and energy to have any principled relationship in this society. The extraordinary divorce rate, the proliferation of “swinging singles” bars and communities, the porno theater and nude bar in every neighborhood, rising child abuse, and widespread alcoholism and drug abuse are graphic evidence of the pressures and alienation in peoples’ lives. But to depict gay relationships as “extremely difficult,” subject to “enormous strains over and above... heterosexual relationships,” and as “rarely long lasting,” “requiring much more cultivation, much more time and energy, in short,

much more self-indulgence” is only more evidence of the RU’s failure to investigate and think about what they are saying.

We do not mean to imply that gay relationships are more ideal or subject to fewer pressures than heterosexual relationships. Gay relationships are less than ideal; heterosexual relationships are less than ideal. Gays do have to deal with pressures coming from anti-gayness that many heterosexuals don’t have to deal with: fear of getting fired, repression by the vice squad, psychological pressures of having to deal with being told you are “sick” and “unnatural,” family rejection, etc. However, personal lives in many other sections of society, particularly among national minorities, are subject to “strains over and above” those in white heterosexual relationships. Black relationships are subject to the “additional” pressures of white supremacy and chauvinism, such as economic discrimination, police repression, welfare rules which break up families, etc. Yet we doubt that the RU would characterize principled relationships between black people as requiring much more cultivation or “self-indulgence” – to do so would be blatantly chauvinist. And to so characterize principled gay relationships is only further evidence of the RU subjectivism and muddy thinking on the “gay question.”

To sum up, then, the RU puts forward that gayness is a manifestation of petit bourgeois ide-

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ology, since it is self-indulgent, individualistic, an escape, an individual solution of a social problem, and since gays are at the periphery of society. We say that these conclusions are not based on fact; they are gross generalizations of the sort that come from personal fears, threats, and prejudices which are proven incorrect by even minimal investigation. To put forth conclusions based on no investigation and one-sided thinking is hardly materialist or dialectical.

CHAPTER 4. ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND COMMUNISTS

The RU concedes that gays have the ability to be strong anti-imperialists. We are glad to find something in the RU position on gays that we can agree with. The strong participation of gays in the anti-war movement clearly shows this. We also agree that gays are not automatically anti-imperialists by virtue of their gayness, no more than heterosexuals or workers are automatically anti-imperialist. But gays, regardless of their class position do have the concrete experience of oppression (e.g. police repression) that may help them see the capitalist system for what it is. Anti-imperialist gays and their political development should be nurtured, particularly by communists drawing a clear line between themselves and the bourgeoisie by fighting for the rights of gays and against the oppression of gays. Comrades, who through their subjective, ultra-left prejudices, do not seek to recruit every possible ally to the working-class struggle are not worthy of being called communists.

However, the RU says that gays “cannot be communists... because homosexuals do not carry the struggle between men and women into their most personal relationships they are not prepared in principle for the arduous task of class transformation.” Further, “to be a communist, we must accept and welcome struggle in all facets of our

lives, personal as well as political... Homosexuals cannot be communists, that is, belong to communist organizations where people are committed to struggle against all aspects of their lives.” Portions of these statements are correct; others are absurd and undialectical.

It is true that communists must accept struggle in all facets of our lives. It is not true that communists are committed to struggle against all aspects of our lives. As communists, we are committed to struggle against those aspects of our lives that retard or hold back the struggle for socialist revolution. As communists we support—not struggle against—those aspects that further our goal of a socialist revolution. A personal relationship between two anglo people, or two Afro-Americans, or two Vietnamese people or two proletarians does not mean that such people are therefore not prepared to struggle against national oppression, imperialism, or the bourgeoisie. And contrary to the RU’s wishful thinking, a relationship between two men or two women does not therefore mean that they are not prepared to struggle, in principle, against male chauvinism and supremacy. In truth, this “in principle” business is nothing but waving a red flag to cover the right essence of their line on the “gay question.” (By right opportunism we refer to the tactic of pursuing a course which has immediate benefits, but which when carried out has the long-range effect of holding back or injur-

ing the class struggle.) A good communist is not determined by whether he or she relates sexually to the opposite sex, but on how devoted he or she is to the revolutionary cause of the working class. The logical extension of the RU's position is that one must be in a heterosexual relationship to be a true communist. By this standard, Uncle Ho Chi Minh, who never married and whose devotion to the struggle of the working class need not be defended here, would not qualify.

No matter how much the RU wishes to prattle about gays "in principle," the concrete fact is that gay comrades have shown that they are prepared, in practice, for the arduous task of proletarian revolution. They have participated and taken responsible roles in almost every significant revolutionary movement in recent years, from the civil rights to Black liberation struggles, from anti-war actions to Dump Nixon, from the revolutionary workers movement to GI organizing, from the women's movement to anti-repression and prison work. They have been in study groups and work collectives. Gay comrades, with their heterosexual comrades, have been remolding and steeling themselves, going among and becoming one with the people. If you did not see us or know we were there, it was not because we were deceitful or hiding in shame. We have not considered sex and our love relationships as primary to our political work. We had other priorities: study, political work, etc.

Also, we were isolated from other gay comrades and unwilling to press the struggle forward on the gay question as individuals. We believe that our former silence involved an amount of liberalism toward a line we disagreed with and a certain lack of ideological clarity which inhibited our abilities to take the question as seriously as we should have. This situation has changed, and we have no intention now of sitting idly by and letting such subjectivist garbage as the RU and other communist organizations are putting out gain hegemony among the communist forces. While we do not see that the “gay question” is a major issue, we do believe that its correct or incorrect resolution will ultimately affect the success of the coming socialist revolution and the building of socialism and communism. Petit bourgeois ways of thinking, such as subjectivism, tailism, dogmatism, opportunism, and empiricism do not remain isolated in this question or that, but indicate the continuing need for class struggle within the communist forces.

CHAPTER 5. MATERIAL OPPRESSION

Once again, the RU fails to stop and think, or even investigate what it is saying when it writes:

Imperialism profits directly from the oppression and exploitation of women. This is not true for gay people. They are not materially oppressed as a group, and the denial of their democratic rights does not secure great profits for the ruling class.

But in real life it is rarely such a simplistic matter as the direct immediacy implied in the formula “oppression equals great profits.” Rather, in advanced capitalist society there are many superstructural and ideological forms that do not directly “secure great profits” but whose “usefulness” is indirect in that they help maintain conditions (disunity, apathy, cynicism, backwardness) that allow the continued expropriation of “great profits.”

People’s ideas don’t just happen. The ideas of different societies reflect the history of class contradictions and their development. In each historical period the existence of phenomena and their process of development are analyzed and explained by applying a particular ideology, the world outlook of the ruling class. In the Catholic Church, for example, Thomas Aquinas wrote in the *Summa Theologica* that homosexual acts are unnatural,

lustful, and sinful because they are the pursuit of pleasure to the exclusion of procreation, which he called the god-given purpose of the sexual organs. Our “revolutionaries” today would agree, only changing “sinful” to read “counter-revolutionary.”

But Aquinas and the church did not just “discover” these ideas. The church explains things in terms of god, but the idea of “God” serves as a smokescreen to mask the real source of religious ideas: the ruling class which perpetuates religion and its maxims to serve its own material interests. Religion is important to the capitalist ruling class as it was to the slave-owning and feudal ruling classes because capitalists see things in terms of profit and power (their world outlook) and they act, therefore, to sustain those institutions such as religion that help maintain their rule.

To say that there is no profit to the capitalist in the oppression of gays is to ignore the basic theorems of the science of Marxism. Does the RU believe that it is simply an accident, or “natural” that gays are oppressed? The fact is that gay people are materially oppressed and the material basis for that oppression indeed lies in the maintenance of profit and power of the capitalist.

Our investigation leads us to believe that the material basis for the oppression of gays can be found in the role of the bourgeois nuclear family under class society in the maintenance and perpetuation of the division of labor. The bourgeois

nuclear family is the economic institutionalization of personal relationships under capitalism. It is a socially isolated unit consisting of a husband, a wife, and their children. The husband works outside the home. The wife, whether she also works outside the home, works within it as invisible labor which maintains and reproduces the labor force. The purpose of the bourgeois family is to: 1. socialize children into understanding and accepting class relationships as they exist in this country today; 2. reproduce the class structure in microcosm; and 3. privatize the maintenance and reproduction of the working class. Class society establishes/maintains and perpetuates divisions of labor including sexual divisions. Sexual division of labor is of incalculable use to the bourgeoisie, dividing workers into two great camps, those in social labor and those in private labor; those in private labor can and have been called forward as a reserve army of labor according to the needs of the bourgeoisie.

A. Historical Perspectives

Historically, as collective economies broke down and economic relations based on patriarchy and rising capitalism emerged, man's labor was increasingly that of commodity production and his role included the provision of the material necessities for the maintenance and propagation of the family. (The sexual division of labor had existed prior to this historical development,

but it was not accompanied by the super-structural characteristic of sex-roles – standards of personal character and behavior according to gender.) Woman's labor was increasingly individualized and restricted to items of use value, i.e., for private and indirect consumption. Her role included the maintenance of current labor power (husband), the rearing and education of future labor power (children), and the care of expended or discarded labor power (sick, injured, and elderly.).

The sexual division of labor, reified as “natural,” is of material benefit to the bourgeoisie in a capitalist society where collective replacement of daily needs is not provided for. The working woman in the home does not directly sell her labor power as such. Under capitalism, the value of her “invisible” labor power is appropriated by and benefits the bourgeoisie through her role in the family, which requires her to shop for food, clothing, etc., cook, maintain the home, and look after the family, including the wide range of emotional and psychological needs, such as defusing her husband's anger from the exploitation of his job.

With the industrial revolution and the full development of capitalism, some women were incorporated into the public sector of the working class. Nevertheless, the working woman's role at home has not changed materially. Because her nurturing and service role has not been recognized as having economic value necessary to the

maintenance of capitalism, but only as a “natural” and biologically determined sex characteristic, it is likewise considered “natural” that the working woman continues to bear the primary burden of creating a healthy home life for the family.

“The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as its molecules;” and, “Within the family he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat.”⁹ This sexual division of labor indeed secures great profits for the bourgeoisie, for there is a structural unity between the sexual division of labor and class exploitation:

The first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male. Monogamy was a great historical advance, but at the same time it inaugurated, along with slavery and private wealth, that epoch, lasting until today, in which every advance is likewise a relative regression, in which the well-being and development of the one group are attained by the misery and repression of the other. It is the cellular form of civilized society, in which we can already study the nature of the antagonisms and contradictions which develop

⁹ F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2020, p. 60.

fully in the latter.

Division of labor and private property are... identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity.¹⁰

The ruling class ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships...; hence the relationships which make the one class the ruling class, therefore its ideas of its dominance.¹¹

To maintain the division of labor so crucial to the maintenance of its rule, the bourgeoisie has developed a powerful and pervasive ideology. It includes the radically opposing sex models which permeate education and culture: Men are to be physically strong, courageous and combative; women learn to be supportive and passive. Starting with childhood, both boys (cars, mechanical sets, guns) and girls (dolls, sewing kits, play stoves) receive the toys which will train them for their eventual roles in the economy. Bourgeois ideology and institutions make sure this indoctrination continues throughout a person's life.

¹⁰ Marx and Engels, "Feuerbach, Opposition of the Materialistic and Idealistic Outlook, (The German Ideology)," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. 1, p. 34.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 47.

B. Sexuality, Reproduction, and Sex-Roles

Similarly, anti-gayness is a necessary part of bourgeois ideology. Implicit in the fact of two men or two women relating to each other is the rejection of the necessity of basing a relationship on the socially defined “inferiority” or “superiority” (according to physical characteristics) of its participants. When men and women see themselves as equal the bourgeoisie loses one of its basic “divide and conquer” weapons. Working men can recognize that the sexual privileges and short range benefits they derive from the bourgeois oppression of women are minimal and not in their class interest.

Likewise, women in rejecting definitions of inferiority can see themselves as workers and become militant fighters for socialist revolution. The bourgeoisie, terrified by the communist specter of the equality of women and men, labels sexual equality as unnatural. Gayness is also labeled “unnatural;” it is a threat to bourgeois dominance. Gayness is “unnatural,” and therefore a threat to bourgeois dominance, precisely because it rejects the “natural” bourgeois society as reflected in the “natural” bourgeois/proletarian relationship of the nuclear family; it also implies that sexual relationships need not be tied to reproduction.

The ruling class should be encouraged by the fact that they are not alone in this perception. They have what we consider to be some very

unlikely allies. The October League strongly condemns gay relationships on the grounds that they cannot produce children and thus are anti-social and attack the family. There are two basic errors in this position. One is the confusion of sexuality with reproduction. The other is the failure to understand that when societies undergo a qualitative change, so do all of the basic institutions that uphold them—including personal relationships and child-rearing, and the dominant and subordinate nature of sexuality and reproduction within them.

Sexuality and reproduction are not synonymous. Most sexual intercourse is not for the purpose of reproduction. Witness the widespread demand for contraceptives. There is not an inherent unity between sexuality, reproduction, and love relationships. Research done with the goal of showing that sexuality is inherently a part of reproduction has been discredited; this is discussed at more length in the Appendix. For Communists to put forward as a line the supposed principle that the “material basis” for love relationships is reproduction is unscientific. It is as if these Communists looked superficially and mechanically at the particularized practice of the Soviet Union in the 1930s, summed it up and applied it to the U.S. today. But the experience of the USSR was particular, because the country’s population had just been decimated in one imperialist war, industrial

development was just getting off the ground, and there was an imminent threat of another imperialist war.

The continued existence of the world's only socialist country was in question. To meet this crisis, the Bolshevik Party instituted measures which encouraged the increase of reproduction, such as outlawing abortion and homosexuality, making divorce harder to obtain, granting material incentives to families who would have more children, and the like. But times have changed. We live in an advanced technological society whose population has increased over the last few generations. We do not need to "learn" from history by mechanically applying lessons of the past to a new historical context.

It is also true that in humanity's earliest days, when the physical survival of the species was much more threatened by nature than it is today, people lived under circumstances where reproduction was of immediate concern. Women spent most of their time either pregnant, in childbirth, recovering from pregnancy, and nursing infants. The infant mortality rate was astronomical. As people began to develop technology and to accumulate surpluses, it became necessary to establish clear lines of male inheritance. Reproduction thus came to be institutionalized with the development of private property, the first class relationships, and the institution of marriage. Thus, formalized rela-

tionships developed not out of the necessity of insuring reproduction (which was being taken care of well enough) but out of the need to control it and to control people and their relations to the means of production. These institutions served to curb people's expressions of sexuality by penalizing reproduction outside of marriage which would threaten the transmission of property and property relationships. (One effect of this was to place severe limitations on most women's behavior, since they bore the children. Men were allowed to copulate with relative freedom with concubines, slaves, mistresses, and members of the non-propertied classes in general.)

As societies developed and conditions continued to change—life-spans increased, as did the size of the population—people continued to express their sexuality and to enter into relationships in conflict with the demands of the allocation of private property. In these relationships, sexuality was undoubtedly important while reproduction was generally an undesired side-effect. Taboos and bans against extra-marital relationships existed not because of some metaphysical, moralistic idea of the sanctity of such relationships (these were the superstructural means of enforcing economic relationships) but because illegitimate children—uncontrolled reproduction, offshoots of people's sexuality and love for each other—threatened the means of distributing wealth and power. In soci-

eties where institutionalized relationships existed as ways of distributing property—where distributing property was generally why marriages were arranged—reproduction outside the framework was clearly a threat to those institutions and economic relations.

Under capitalism the effects of the changing means of production and advanced technology have further increased the separation between sexuality and reproduction. For the first time reproduction does not have to be a risk connected with the expression of sexuality. Birth control and abortions are realities. People, including working women, have been struggling to maintain that separation in fights for the right to abortion on demand and for the availability of birth control on demand. These struggles have found their way into popular culture in songs like Loretta Lynn's "The Pill," which celebrates a housewife's freedom from the constant fear of pregnancy which she had lived with before.

The history of civilization has been in part the ruling class' attempts to enforce the connection between sexuality and reproduction in order to preserve private property through the institution of inheritance. Repressive laws against adultery, pre-marital sex, illegitimacy and homosexuality (which often carries the heaviest penalties), are examples of the repressive measures taken by the ruling class to punish those who rebel against

its false unity of sexuality and reproduction. Of course this does not mean that as communists we advocate that people place primary emphasis on the gratification of their sexual urges. At this time, love relationships between two people are probably the best way of meeting people's emotional and sexual needs. Also for most people these relationships are now the most practical way of carrying out reproduction. But if two women, for example, should choose to build such a relationship, this does not mean that they either will not or have not had children.

Indeed, many gay people do have children; some of us were involved in heterosexual relationships before we came out, and we have fought long and hard for the right to keep our children from being taken away by the judicial arm of the bourgeoisie. As scientific socialists, we cannot deny the possibilities of the role that the continuing development of science and technology may come to play in reproduction. Just as it is possible to avoid reproduction through scientific methods of birth control, it is also possible to aid reproduction through artificial insemination.

Finally, we understand the meaning of social obligation in a workers' state to be different from the capitalist definition. We understand that a situation could arise in which the state would call upon the people to produce more children. This call would apply to all members of society, gay

or heterosexual, in relationships or not. But the final responsibility for child-raising and reproduction would no longer lie with the nuclear family; rather, it lies with the entire population. An example of this is found in Vietnam after the Christmas bombings in 1973. The international community flooded Vietnam with offers to care for and adopt the orphans whose parents had died in the bombings. But the Vietnamese refused, saying that whether or not the natural parents survived, it was the collective societal responsibility and desire to keep the children as their own, and to raise them to be contributing members of the nation.

Reproduction, as the primary basis for personal relationships, is already decreasing in importance under capitalism. This process would be accelerated under socialism. In a society run by workers, the needs of one are the needs of all. The care and upbringing of children is a social obligation in which every citizen takes part. For example, the Peoples' Republic of China has long since recognized the foolishness of keeping most of the female workforce at home with their children. Continuous child care centers are set up, staffed by members of the community, thus freeing parents from direct responsibility. There is no reason why gay people could not participate fully in such programs.

As society progresses beyond capitalism, all of its institutions must develop with it. There is no

room in a workers' state for the perpetuation of an institution created to serve the needs of the ruling classes of the past. To maintain otherwise is to fail to realize that as the material, economic base of society changes (from, for instance, feudal to capitalist, or capitalist to socialist), the superstructural aspects (such as education, culture, government, etc.) will change to eventually reflect the further development, of social contradictions. The bourgeois nuclear family is not immune from this process.

In summary, the bourgeoisie does not oppress people because it thinks such oppression is funny; and the oppression of gay people is anything but funny, or so slight that it can be dismissed as negligible. It runs the gamut from the denial of democratic rights, such as housing, employment, and education, to police repression and brutality, to the imprisonment, castration and lobotomizing of gays, to the use of adverse conditioning (chemical and electrical shock), to "cure" gays in state prison hospitals, such as Vacaville. Economically, it is our experience that many open gays are forced to work in the lowest paying, non-unionized small manufacturing shops where the boss is not much concerned with who a person sleeps with or if a person has a "green card," but who uses a worker's status as added leverage for increased exploitation. Gay parents are denied custody of their children. Gay people are forced to live in over-priced "gay

ghettos” such as Hollywood. Outside social activity, particularly for gay men, is practically limited to Mafia-controlled, overpriced bars, whose owners enjoy a cozy relationship with the police. Such is the material oppression of gay people. It is no less heinous because its victims are determined by sexuality instead of by color or class. Rather, it is the conscious oppression of gay people by a class-conscious bourgeoisie acting only out of its own material interests.

CHAPTER 6. DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

The RU, when dealing with the democratic rights of gay people is even more muddled and unclear than usual:

The RU supports the democratic rights of gay people under capitalism, but we do not feel that the Attica Brigade has to take a stand on this. Although we support these democratic rights, we do not do so in an abstract way. We oppose the arbitrary use of laws against homosexuality and we oppose bourgeois methods of treating homosexuals as “criminals.”

We do not uphold any so-called general abstract “right to be homosexual.” To make a comparison with religion—we support the democratic rights of people to exercise freedom of religion, but we wouldn’t support the right of some Jesus freak sect to proselytize in working-class neighborhoods, but we would support a Black Muslim being brutalized in prison. We support the democratic right of free speech, but we don’t support the racial demagogues.

But it is not that they support the democratic rights of gays “in an abstract way,” they don’t support the democratic rights of gays in any way. It is

not even a matter of “all talk, no action.” Nowhere, except in this position paper, have we found a reference by the RU to the democratic rights of gay people. The RU’s *Draft Programme* has nothing to say except that socialism:

...will wipe out the decadence of capitalism in all spheres. Prostitution, drug addiction, homosexuality and other practices which bourgeois society breeds and the bourgeoisie promotes to degrade and enslave the masses of people, will be abolished. The prostitutes, drug addicts, homosexuals and others who are caught up in these things will be re-educated to become productive members of society, with working class consciousness.¹²

If the RU is concerned with working class consciousness, they should re-read Lenin:

Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected—unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from Social-Democratic points of view and no other.... We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for

¹² Revolutionary Union, *Draft Programme*, pp. 11-12.

still being unable to organize sufficiently wide, striking and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages.¹³

We ask the RU, do they have nothing to say about the lobotomizing of gays in state hospitals, the continued police harassment and brutalizing of gay people, the denial of gay parents the custody of their children? Do they think these things are “right-on”? From their silence, it would seem so.

He is no Social-Democrat who forgets in practice his obligation to be ahead of all in raising, accentuating and solving every general democratic question.... We would be “politicians” and Social-Democrats in name only (as all too often happens in reality), if we failed to realize that our task is to utilize every manifestation of discontent, and to gather and turn to the best account every protest, however small.¹⁴

In fact, the RU has abandoned its revolutionary duty to arouse the masses by exposing these concrete examples of reactionary bourgeois rule and to explain to the working class how these outrageous actions and the bourgeois “anti-gay” rationale behind them only serves to weaken and

¹³ V. I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

divide the working-class struggle. Their failure to do so, besides holding back the consciousness and unity of the working class, is a failure to mobilize every possible ally of the working class. Every communist gay can point to numerous instances of honest anti-imperialist gay people who have had their political development retarded, or who have become anti-communist, because of the rampant anti-gay attitudes within the communist forces. Communists must draw a clear line of demarcation between themselves and the bourgeoisie. Mao says, “We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports” and quotes Qufu: “Whatever you do, you must be sure that you do not sadden your friends and gladden your enemies.”¹⁵ The RU completely fails to do this, both in theory and in practice.

¹⁵ Mao Zedong, “Interview with Three Correspondents” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. II, Foreign Languages Press, Paris, 2021, p. 250.

CHAPTER 7. THE GAY MOVEMENT

After laying out its “theory” on the gay question, the RU goes on to discuss the practice of the gay liberation movement. Once again, the RU cannot deal with reality when it differs from their subjective attitudes. There is empirical evidence for the RU to view the gay movement as anti-working class, just as there is empirical evidence for women to see men as the enemy. However, what we must learn is to apply the unity of theory and practice to our analysis. It is not sufficient to collect isolated empirical data ripped from historical context; things do not exist isolated from a concrete reality. Experience must be analyzed and illuminated by the application of historical and dialectical materialism. The RU fails to do this. Instead, they resort to untruths and misrepresentation, totally disregarding the concrete historical context that the gay movement has existed in.

First, they say the gay movement raised homosexuality to a principle by raising the slogan “gay is good” as a strategy for defeating imperialism. Let us look at this slogan in its concrete context. The present-day gay movement was “sparked” by the Stonewall Riots along Christopher Street in New York in 1969. Gays took to the streets, fighting back against the police who had been arresting and openly brutalizing them. The riots lasted for several nights. Soon afterwards, Gay Liberation Front

chapters (GLF, named after the National Liberation Front of Vietnam) were formed across the country, mostly by gays who had been active in the student and anti-war movements. One of the initial slogans of GLF was "Gay is Good." The slogan was not raised as a strategy for anything. Its purpose was to strike out against the bourgeois thinking promoted by sociologists, psychologists and religious leaders that gayness was bad, evil, sick, unnatural, arrested development, etc. It served to reawaken gay people to a sense of health and productiveness in society. As such it was not unlike the early slogan on the Black liberation movement, "Black is Beautiful." Given the subjective and objective conditions of gay people at the time it was a necessary slogan and had a tremendous liberating effect on the collective consciousness of gay people. If the RU indeed is so concerned with people raising their sexual preference to a "principle" they should look at themselves. They have truly raised sexuality to a "principle" by making heterosexuality mandatory for membership in their organization.

The next main slogan to emerge was "Out of the closet, into the streets." Its basic purpose was to get gays to "come out" from hiding in the "closet" and fight for their democratic rights and against anti-gay attitudes and propaganda. At the same time GLF did organizing for anti-war demonstrations. Gay women spoke at mass women's and lesbian

anti-war contingents, stressing the importance of anti-imperialism in the struggle for the liberation of women and lesbians, and speaking for the “Sign the Agreement” slogan and against the Trotskyite “Out Now” slogan.

But the gay movement, like the student, anti-war, Afro-American, women’s and other movements, had its contradictions:

The Vietnam war and the Black liberation struggles represented the main sources of radicalization for the petit-bourgeoisie (as well as others) in this period.... As the anti-imperialist movement grew and spread, alongside of it blossomed the dope-smoking do-your-own-thing “youth culture,” which was sparked by the anti-imperialist movement while in essence being opposed to it, although both tendencies were very much intertwined in practice.¹⁶

The gay movement “arose during the period in which the working class was not headed by a conscious vanguard, a revolutionary communist party, and for that reason the class could not direct and unite all the struggles of the people.” We wonder why it is that the RU sees and concretely analyzes contradictions in other movements and ignores them in its “analysis” of the gay movement?

¹⁶ Revolutionary Union, *Rushing Headlong into the Swamp*, March 1975, p. 1.

The gay movement operated in the same context as these other progressive struggles. Chief among the contradictions within the gay movement, as in other groups, was the predominance of petit-bourgeois elements. The communist forces in the gay movement were also small in number and still primitive and got very little support for their work from other communists. Many gay communists saw anti-war work and the working-class movement as more important; gay women communists saw the women's movement as a higher priority than the gay movement. As a practical result, the gay movement was abandoned by communists to the leadership of the petit-bourgeoisie to where it is now dominated, on the one hand, by a few opportunists and reformists, such as the Gay Community Services Center (GCSC) and Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), who are bought off by government and foundation grants. On the other hand, there are those in the gay community who put forth gay separatism and chauvinism as the solution to gay oppression. These separatists, along with the gay reformers, are the most vocal segment of the gay population.

We communists must learn to distinguish appearances from essences. The essence of this separatism is petit-bourgeois. It is an attempt to escape, an individual and non-struggle approach. It does elevate the struggle between men and women to the primary contradiction. And it is a

response—an incorrect response to the oppression of gay people by the bourgeoisie. Who are the gay separatists? They are men and women who express their response to bourgeois oppression almost exclusively through their gayness. They do not have class consciousness and therefore cannot and do not analyze gayness in relation to the capitalist system.

But the gay separatists and reformers are an appearance of the whole gay population. They are not the representatives of gay people, and they do not speak to the real aspirations of gay people. The fact that anti-gay communists take the most conspicuous gay people for the whole points again to their one-sided, superficial and subjective approach. These same communists do not base their analysis of the Black national question on the NAACP, SCLC, or the Black Muslims, who at one time were the dominant forces in the Black liberation movement.

Lesbian groups at first were affiliated with the gay movement but, feeling a greater unity with the women's movement, soon left and joined the women's movement. Lesbian groups, like the now predominantly male gay movement, had many contradictions which were compounded by a SWP takeover in many areas. The SWP, as in the anti-war movement, catered to the most backward elements through their lowest common denominator line. As a result of the SWP and other petit-bour-

geois influences, most lesbian groups degenerated to such lines as separatism, Amazon nation, and others. Recently, however, some gay women, mostly workers, have come to see the futility of such lines and are beginning to investigate Marxism. Such women should clearly be encouraged:

The stand of the proletariat is not to slam the door on other “movement forces” who haven’t changed, who still uphold a petit-bourgeois idea of revolution and communism. The proletariat wants to win them over.¹⁷

Our attitude should be as Mao describes:

To criticize the people’s shortcomings is necessary... but in doing so we must truly take the stand of the people and speak out of whole-hearted eagerness to protect and educate them. To treat comrades like enemies is to go over to the stand of the enemy.¹⁸

In summary, the gay movement is not in its present state because it is innately bad or incorrect. Rather, it is because the communist movement has failed thus far through its own subjectivism and primitiveness, to recognize the progressive aspects

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁸ Mao Zedong, “Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art” in *Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, Vol. III, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

of the gay movement and therefore to unite with it and give it working class leadership. The gay movement must be looked at historically, in its concrete context, and not as any “thing-in-itself,” immutable and incapable of changing.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the RU and others fail to support any of their assertions with concrete, historical, material facts. The few times they do offer any factual material is when it is ripped out of its historical context. In short, the methodology of the RU and other groups concerning the gay question is anything but historical, materialist, and dialectical. Their whole analysis is based on such petit-bourgeois ways of thinking such as subjectivism, empiricism, doctrinairism, metaphysics, tailism, and opportunism. These groups should follow their own pompous advice and initiate some struggle into their most personal lives, i.e., their own dearly held anti-gay prejudices.

These groups do not offer a shred of evidence proving gayness is an individual (petit-bourgeois) solution to imperialism, nor that it per se precludes struggle around male supremacy and chauvinism. Sexual relationships between two people are individual in the sense that two individuals are involved, but they operate in a social context. As such, given the concrete conditions of bourgeois society, heterosexual relationships are just as likely to be unprincipled, energy draining, “decadent,” and seen by their participants as havens from outside pressures, as homosexual relationships. At this point, neither, limited to itself, encourages the masses of people to fight around their needs.

There is nothing magical about either type of relationship.

The contradiction between homosexuals and heterosexuals is non-antagonistic; it can be worked out through principled struggle. Communists, gays and heterosexuals alike, must unite with the progressive aspects raised by the gay movement and struggle against those bourgeois elements which exist. The communist's role is not to trash or abandon any possible allies to the bourgeoisie but to show that socialist revolution under the leadership of the working class and its party is the means to the liberation of all people. This consciousness will not arise spontaneously in the gay movement. "This consciousness [can] only be brought to them from without." Just as men, women, heterosexuals, gays and minorities cross all class lines, any organization of these groups will reflect one or another class line at any given historical period depending on the strength and development of the different class forces. Gays are not inherently revolutionary (as some gay groups would say), nor inherently reactionary (as some "communist" groups would say). The class nature of gay liberation will change only when it is given revolutionary working-class leadership. Until then, like all other groups, bourgeois ideology will fill the political vacuum. Even the working class, left to itself, can only develop trade union consciousness, which in the last analysis is bourgeois. To expect the gay movement to be

any different when left without proletarian leadership is pure idealism. Gay people, particularly working-class gays, are perfectly capable of enthusiastically grasping the science of Marxism-Leninism and of being disciplined revolutionary fighters. To make enemies of potential allies is to abandon the working class and its interests.

We make the following rightful and righteous demands:

That the Marxist-Leninist methodology of dialectical and historical materialism be applied to the gay question and that subjectivist, “natural” bourgeois ideas based on no investigation be cast aside;

That serious criticism/self-criticism be made of anti-gay attitudes among comrades;

That gay people who hold ideological, political and organizational unity with a communist organization be allowed membership;

That the democratic rights of gay people be firmly upheld and struggled for by communists;

That evidence of anti-gay attitudes among the working class be struggled with by showing whose interests such prejudices actually serve.

NO INVESTIGATION, NO RIGHT TO SPEAK!

DOWN WITH SUBJECTIVISM AND OTHER
PETIT-BOURGEOIS WAYS OF THINKING

LONG LIVE THE UNITY OF THE MULTI-NATIONAL
WORKING CLASS AND DOWN WITH ALL FORMS OF
MALE CHAUVINISM AND SUPREMACY THAT DESTROY
THAT UNITY

VENCEREMOS

APPENDIX 1: A SUMMARY OF OUR LIMITED RESEARCH ON THE GAY QUESTION

As Marxist-Leninists we believe in the necessity of basing our positions on an analysis of concrete conditions. Thus, in order to develop a comprehensive theory to deal with the question of gay people as communists, it is necessary to look not just at what is evident on the surface but to examine the question in an historical and scientific perspective. To that end, we have begun research on the question of homosexuality in general, broken down into the four main categories used below. This investigation is only a bare beginning for the systematic inquiries which must go on to understand the question. Our investigations are handicapped by the evident bias which has guided much research in the past, since much of it has been done under the funding and general ideological guidance of the large foundations and major universities of the leading imperialist powers, and it's not too hard to figure out whose interests such research would serve. At this point in our research, our most significant finding is that most of the studies done are inconclusive, meaning that it is possible to find studies supporting either side of the argument.

A. Anthropological Investigation

There has been a great deal of research done on

the sexual practices of hundreds of different societies throughout the world. It has been found that there is a tremendous variety of sexual practices, both hetero- and homosexual; the acts that one society considers normal, and perhaps laudable (for example, kissing), other societies find disgusting (the Bajau tribe of the Sulu Islands of the southern Philippines are horrified at the thought of mouth-to-mouth contact).¹ And it is generally known that the sexual practices of Europeans were regarded with derision by many of the “primitive” peoples who first had contact with such practices; hence the scornful name of the “missionary position” to the male-on-top form of intercourse observed.

Just as there is a wide variety of heterosexual practices found in various societies, homosexuality is also found in many societies. Likewise, there are various attitudes toward homosexuality in these societies. Information on gayness among more isolated societies is difficult to come by and to evaluate for various reasons: first, that for many years, it did not occur to Western observers that such things went on; second, that some cultures place a taboo on relating sexual behavior to persons not of the same sex or the same family, let alone of a totally different society; and finally, the unreliability of males who report on females’ sexual behavior, and of course, vice versa. Naturally, the same reservations apply to reports on hetero-

sexual behavior. Nonetheless, it seems that gayness exists in numerous cultures, and again with varying degrees of acceptance and limitations.² Margaret Mead reports in her studies on Samoa that gay relationships were accepted as a matter of course. Other studies, focusing on the rather different question of transvestitism, have indicated that societies in which there is relatively weak sex-role differentiation (where men and women are not so tightly bound into ways of behaving based on their sex) tend to accept transvestitism more easily.³

The question of gayness and sex-roles leads to a number of further questions which demand investigation, not just in an anthropological context but in broader ways. What is the material basis for sex roles and the sexual division of labor? Most women's jobs in agricultural societies are tasks that can be performed while tending to and nursing children.⁴ How has the material basis for such sex roles changed with changing means of production?

Many cultural taboos and requirements around sexuality are based on the necessity for preserving the species under circumstances which are much more physically trying than currently exist in industrial societies (high infant mortality rates, short life expectancies, greater proportions of physically crippling accidents and diseases, etc.). With the change in these conditions, what changes can the superstructure make while still insuring the

preservation of the species? All of these questions need to be dealt with not just from the narrow perspective of what appears to be “natural” for people in the capitalist Western countries but from the internationalist viewpoint of how such questions affect our brothers and sisters around the world. They must be dealt with in a materialist, not an idealist, way.

B. Biology

There has been some attempt to resolve the question of why various individuals become gay by looking for biological reasons. Sexuality in the biological sense is determined by a number of factors, not just whether an individual is born with one or the other common types of external genitalia. Scientists recognize that even though a baby may be born with a penis, the infant may be biologically more a female, when hormones, chromosomal makeup, and other physical characteristics are looked at. However, except for the more obvious physiological cases, as when a person with a penis begins menstruating, and such cases comprise a tiny segment of the general population, no studies have been done which seem to indicate conclusively any biological differences between homo- and heterosexual people. Even a study by a research psychiatrist with a noticeable bias in favor of traditional sex roles concedes that “biological research offers new support for the empiri-

cally derived psychoanalytic theory of bisexuality”⁵ meaning that it is impossible to tell biologically at birth whether an individual will be gay or straight, both or neither. Another study points out that “in reality there are no innate aims in the sexual drive other than discharge of tension, and no innate objects in this drive. Any aims and any objects that become attached to this drive do so only as a result of experience. Young male mammals who have not been previously conditioned will react to any sufficient sexual stimuli, whether these are autoerotic, heterosexual, or homoerotic in character; and they may, moreover, become conditioned to any of these stimuli. Hetero-sexuality, therefore, no less than homosexuality, is learned in the context of one’s experience, and neither has anything to do with “instinct.”⁶

Basically, the state of biological research into human sexuality is in its infancy, so to speak, and when a study appears which indicates that there may be physiological differences between homo- and heterosexuals it is responded to within a short time by another study which convincingly criticizes the first for its methodology and flaws in experimental technique. At this time, however, there is nothing in the literature which would give much support to the position that homosexuality is biologically determined for homosexuals as a group; but the possibility of it being a factor in individual cases is open.

C. Psychological Studies

Again, when looking at evidence of people's psychological makeup in evaluating causes of homo- and heterosexuality, the biases of the investigators (which are almost uniformly anti-homosexual) must be noted. Still, there are a few items worth noting. First, there is the widespread acceptance among psychologists of the validity of the Kinsey reports. These showed that people are generally not totally homosexual or totally heterosexual, but rather that there is a sexual continuum, with people tending to fit not at the extreme ends of the scale, (exclusively heterosexual or exclusively homosexual) but closer to the middle. In other words, if a rating of 1 indicated total heterosexual and 5 indicated total homosexuality, most persons would rate as 2s or as 4s.⁷

Second, most studies evaluating the size of the homosexual population in the United States and other advanced capitalist countries have been done by psychologists. Their results vary. The Kinsey study has placed the figure of "consistently practicing homosexuals" at somewhere around 4% of the population. Later research considers that finding low, making estimates of roughly 10% (or about 20 million gay people in America). Further, even Kinsey figures estimate that roughly a third of the population has had some homosexual experience—a figure that is remarkable given the het-

erosexual bias of Western civilization.

Third, investigators doing blind studies for mental disturbances comparing homo- and heterosexual subjects (blind meaning that those evaluating the tests didn't know if the subjects were gay or not) found it not possible to tell whether the subject was homo- or heterosexual based on the psychological tests.⁸

Finally, techniques used against gay people (as discussed above in the section on democratic rights) are often originated and tested and then reported on in various psychological and medical journals. In examining the Index Medicus, the guide to articles published in medical journals it is possible to find columns of listings of articles on aversion therapy and other proposed "cures" for homosexuality. It is instructive to look at these articles on aversion therapy, since they indicate the lengths to which some agents of the bourgeoisie are willing to go to enforce conformity with their sexual standards: reports of individuals tortured for five and ten day periods by being deprived of sleep and subjected to electric shocks to "decondition" their homosexual "responses."

D. The History of Gay People and Sexuality in Western Society

This paper has only begun to touch the surface of the history of gay people in our society. Further research is necessary to document in more detail

the history both of homosexuality and of anti-gay repression in the West. We have made some mention of the role of Christianity. (It might be noted at this point that the term “faggot” evidently comes from the practice of using gay men as torches for the fires which burnt witches—often women who broke out of approved sex stereotypes—and heretics, an appalling practice which neatly links the importance that maintaining sex roles has for the ruling class). Much is made of the presence of homosexuality in slave societies, while there is little mention that slavery in fact represented an advance historically over previous forms of economic organization. And there is nothing to show that in one of the most decadent of all slave societies, that of the American slavocracy in the pre-Civil War South, that either the ruling class or the peasantry had more homosexual behavior than the rest of the country. Indeed, the ruling class in the South is generally cited for its outrageously promiscuous and oppressive heterosexual behavior. Still, in doing such research it will remain a major problem that most history is written by and for members of the ruling class.

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8. Ibid.

APPENDIX 2: POSITION PAPER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY UNION ON HOMOSEXUALITY AND GAY LIBERATION

The following is the RU position on homosexuality and gay liberation. Our position on homosexuality and the gay liberation movement starts from an analysis of the concrete conditions of life in the USA today. The problem we direct ourselves to is what is the correct path to follow if we are to defeat imperialism and establish socialism in this country, and what role will homosexuals and gay liberation play in the revolutionary struggle. We will deal first with our analysis of homosexuality and then with an analysis of gay liberation.

The USA is an imperialist power on the decline. It is being attacked by rising revolutionary movements throughout the world and within the USA itself and it is facing increased competition from other imperialist powers. To maintain its wealth and power the ruling class is forced to increase its oppression and exploitation at home. Although this oppression hits hardest on Third World and working-class people, it is felt by almost everybody, including large sections of the petit bourgeoisie. The alienation that people living in capitalist society already feel is greatly intensified. The ruling class attempts to hold back the advancing revolutionary movement by increasing the contradictions between white and Third World workers,

between the working class and the *petit-bourgeoisie*, between men and women.

Homosexuality is a response—consciously or not—to a male supremacist society. But because it is a response to oppressive institutions and oppressive relationships it is not necessarily a progressive response or one that challenges the power of the monopoly capitalist. We see that the pressures of capitalist society on each individual are tremendous. The difficulty we have in all our relationships, the lack of fulfillment in our daily lives is a source of anxiety and personal suffering. As our relationships become unstable, people—particularly the *petit bourgeoisie*, which has more leisure time—scramble about in a desperate attempt to find some meaning in their lives. Today people are grasping at all kinds of straws, at exotic religious sects, mysticism, drugs, pornography, promiscuity, sex orgies, Trotskyism, etc. People move to rural communes because they feel totally alienated from capitalist society, especially in decaying urban centers. We can understand where such a response comes from, but we don't therefore call it progressive. A response, a movement, a struggle is progressive if it moves the struggle of the working class forward; if it doesn't, it is not progressive.

Homosexuality is an individual response to male supremacy and male chauvinism; it is a response which turns its back to the struggle between men and women. We think that Lesbianism is more

understandable as an escape from male chauvinism; male homosexuality reinforces male chauvinism in its refusal to deal with relationships with women. Both forms of homosexuality, however, are premised upon the unwillingness to struggle with the opposite sex in very important relationships.

It is important to deal concretely with homosexual relationships as they exist in our society today. Many people, especially women, have become homosexuals as a matter of choice, usually after some involvement in the women's movement. These are women who said they couldn't or wouldn't deal with men in their personal relationships. Such a choice is clearly individualist; it says: *I* have a right to relate the way *I* want to, *I* can do what *I* want with *my* body. There are many people who become homosexual out of inclination, or for a thousand other reasons which we can call more or less unconscious. Objectively, however, there are no real differences between the two cases, although the subjective attitudes of the people involved might be different. In both cases people are in relationships which necessarily place them outside of the mainstream of our society and thus puts enormous strains upon the relationships, strains over and above those which exist in heterosexual relationships, which are by no means ideal. Because of such strains, homosexual relationships are rarely long lasting. The relationships

that are principled require much more cultivation, much more time and energy—in short, much more self-indulgence. This is not meant to put down such relationships as abnormal or immoral. It is simply a recognition of the social context in which homosexual relationships must exist. As materialists, we do not deal with anything in the abstract; we don't deal with homosexuality as it might exist in some future society where people live without sexual or other inhibitions. We don't make reference to some so-called “natural” state. As a rule homosexual relationships in our society are extremely difficult, require a lot of time to make work, if they work at all. They involve a great deal more cultivation than do heterosexual relationships.

Based on the above considerations we see that homosexuals are forced to live on the periphery of society (insofar as their relationships are subject to public abuse), and therefore such relationships can be only individual solutions to the contradictions of imperialism, much in the same way as going to live on a commune is an individual response to alienation or in the same way as embracing a religion is an individual solution. Because people who make such a choice are ostracized is unfortunate, but again it is not a sign of being progressive. The thing that makes it individual – and not progressive – is not that it is done alone (communes can involve a lot of people), but that it does not engage

masses of people in struggle, it doesn't organize or set the basis for organizing masses of people to fight around their needs.

In posing an individual solution to the contradictions of monopoly capitalism, homosexuality is an ideology of the petit-bourgeoisie, and must be clearly distinguished from proletarian ideology. The ideology of the working class is based on the knowledge that the only way to resolve the contradictions of capitalism is through mass struggle with each other and against our common oppressors. To say that homosexuality is based on petit-bourgeois ideology is not to cast aspersions on homosexuals, any more than calling most students petit bourgeois is to put them down. As Chairman Mao says: "In class society everyone lives as a member of a particular class, and every kind of thinking, without exception, is stamped with the brand of a class."

To say that homosexuality is stamped with the brand of the petit-bourgeoisie should not imply that gay people cannot be and aren't strong fighters against imperialism. But we should be clear that it is not the homosexuality of gay people which makes them into anti-imperialist fighters. It is quite possible that many gay people began to recognize the nature of imperialism as a system because of particular attacks on their democratic rights. There is, however, often a difference between the way in which people come to recog-

nize the beast and the weapons they use in fighting it. Gay people can be anti-imperialists, because they can see imperialism as the enemy and they can understand and take up the main spearheads of struggle against imperialism.

While gay people can be anti-imperialists, we feel that they cannot be Communists. To be a Communist, we must accept and welcome struggle in all facets of our lives, personal as well as political. We cannot struggle with male supremacy in the factory and not struggle at home. We feel that the best way to struggle out such contradictions in our personal lives is in stable monogamous relationships between men and women based on mutual love and respect. Because homosexuals do not carry the struggle between men and women into their most intimate relationships they are not prepared, *in principle*, for the arduous task of class transformation.

As Communists we have chosen to put class struggle and the revolutionary movement of the working class and all oppressed people into the forefront of our lives. It is a serious task. "A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture." Because homosexual relationships require so much time, we have found that homosexuals have had an extremely difficult time meeting the strenuous requirements of a communist organization, and they have often put unnecessary burdens on their comrades.

Because we put class struggle first, we are opposed to all relationships which are seen by the people in them as the main source of their well-being or as a source of personal salvation. It is extremely difficult to have totally fulfilling relationships in this society and any attempt to have one must be a full-time job. As things exist now, given the prevalent conditions of relationships under capitalism, we see that monogamous heterosexual relationships are by far the most favorable for providing the grounds for struggle, respect, and love. And it is within such relationships that Communists can best devote their lives to the enormous task ahead. It is important for us to deal with the reality that now exists, with the material conditions which exist. Utopian schemes for relationships such as bisexuality will only disrupt our work. We are not dealing with chimeras of the mind but with a powerful enemy. Perhaps in some future society bisexuality will blossom. This is not for us to decide, and we certainly can't base our lives and the revolutionary movement on such experiments. It is not a change in life style that will overthrow imperialism, but a united front led by the working class fighting in its material interests.

When homosexuality is raised to a principle, when the banner of "gay is good" is raised as a strategy for defeating imperialism then it becomes a reactionary force retarding the struggle of the working class and of the people as a whole. This is

born out in both the theory and the practice of the gay liberation movement.

There has been a lot of confusion about the relationships of the struggle of women to the gay liberation movement. Much of this confusion is based on the fact that many sections of the petit-bourgeois women's movement of the sixties concentrated on the psychological aspects of the oppression of women, on the attitude of male chauvinism. Women's oppression was caused by sexist attitudes, by male chauvinist ideas which placed women (and men) in certain well-defined roles. With such an analysis, parts of the women's movement began to see that gay people were equally oppressed by sexist attitudes and gay relationships equally distorted by oppressive roles. The oppression of women and gay people was seen as rooted in the same cause: sexism.

What this analysis left out was the primary cause of women's oppression—that is, the material cause of this oppression. That is why we speak of male supremacy to refer to the institutional forms of oppression, and male chauvinism as the ideology and psychological attitudes which are used to justify male supremacy. In Marxist terminology they are related as base to superstructure. The oppression of women developed historically out of the division of labor in ancient slave society and continues today with the division of labor in capitalist society. The oppression of women is based

primarily on material oppression due to their position in production (reserve labor force, cheap labor, unpaid work in the home) and reproduction (as mothers). Imperialism profits directly from the oppression and exploitation of women. Male supremacy and male chauvinism are mainstays of imperialism. This is not true for gay people. They are not materially oppressed as a group, and the denial of their democratic rights does not secure greater profits for the ruling class.

The confusion of the fight for democratic rights with a liberation struggle is based on an idealistic, metaphysical understanding of oppression. To raise the slogan of “go gay and smash the state” is to lead all people down the road of certain defeat. The gay liberation movement has no class analysis of imperialism, it claims to be above classes, attacking the “deeper” roots of oppression. But there are no “deeper” roots of oppression. The roots of oppression are summed up in the fundamental contradiction in capitalist society, that between the bourgeoisie and the working class. In reality, gay liberation is anti-working class and counter-revolutionary. Its attacks on the family would rob poor and working people of the most viable social unit for their survival and for their revolutionary struggle against the imperialist system. The only real liberation, the only road to real happiness for homosexuals—is to eliminate the reactionary rotting system that drives them to homosexuality;

and to build a new society, under the rule of the working class, that promotes class culture and ideology—the principles of equality, cooperation and the dignity of collective labor—in opposition to selfishness, self-indulgence and the decadence of individualism and exploitative relations.

The practice of gay liberation bears out its anti-working-class ideology. An example of this is a demonstration called by the National Organization of Women in NYC last August. Although NOW is petit-bourgeois it does have progressive aspects. At this rally Third World Women who had led the struggle of maids at Columbia University against discrimination in hiring and firing were scheduled to speak. Lesbian activists attacked the speakers' stand and seized the microphone because no Lesbian had been on the program. This destroyed the rally and held back the unity of the women's movement.

Gay women also played a destructive role in NY in recent planning for a rally around International Women's Day. All groups present agreed on only raising slogans concerning democratic rights of women such as day-care and free abortion. The fragile unity which existed between the participating groups was destroyed when the gay women refused to take part in any demonstration which didn't raise "support for gay liberation" as a slogan. Many of the Third World women in the group were dismayed at the blatantly anti-working class

and national chauvinist character of the gay group.

The RU supports the democratic rights of gay people under capitalism but we do not feel that the Attica Brigade has to take a stand on this question. Although we support those democratic rights, we do not do so in an abstract way. We oppose the arbitrary use of laws against homosexuality and we oppose bourgeois methods of treating homosexuals as “criminals.” But we do not uphold the so-called general abstract “right to be homosexual.” To make a comparison with religion, we support the democratic rights of people to exercise freedom of religion, but we wouldn’t support the right of some Jesus-freak sect to proselytize in working-class neighborhoods, but we would support a Black Muslim being brutalized in prison. We support the democratic right of freedom of speech, but we don’t support the racist demagogues.

As Communists, we are always guided by the overwhelming principle: to promote, defend and fight for building the unity of the proletariat and the people in struggle against monopoly capitalist rule; to expose, oppose and struggle against everything that divides, demoralizes and weakens the proletariat and the overall anti-imperialist struggle.

Our position can be summarized in three main points:

Homosexuality in the USA today is an individual response to the intensification of the contra-

dictions brought about by decaying imperialism; in particular it is a response to the contradiction between men and women which is rooted in male supremacist institutions and male chauvinist ideology. Because homosexuality is rooted in individualism, it is a feature of petit-bourgeois ideology which puts forth the idea that there are individual solutions to social problems.

Because homosexuality is based on petit-bourgeois ideology and deals with the contradiction between men and women by turning its back to it, (at least in intimate personal relationships), homosexuals cannot be Communists, that is, belong to communist organizations where people are committed to struggle against all forms of individualism, in all aspects of their lives.

Gay liberation in putting forth gayness as a strategy for revolution in this country is a reactionary ideology and can lead us only down the road of demoralization and defeat.

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