"In the Tropics There Is No Sin": Homosexuality and Gay/Lesbian Movements in the Third World

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Since the birth of the contemporary movement for gay/lesbian liberation with the Stonewall Rebellion in the US in 1969, gay/lesbian movements have been rising up around the world, including in the third world. Since the 1980s particularly, lesbians and gay men have declared their existence and formed fledgling organizations in one third world country after another. Many of these people have shown extraordinary courage in being open about their lives and demanding their rights in the face of hatred and violence. With the rise of religious fundamentalism and intolerant nationalism, third world lesbians' and gay men's struggle to live openly and freely has even seemed sometimes to be a struggle against their own peoples and against the course of history.

This study is written in the belief that third world lesbians and gay men are not fighting against history but making history. The repression being directed against them is not a reaffirmation of their regions' authentic cultural traditions. It is one aspect of the suffering that billions of third world people are experiencing as a consequence of the New World Order and the global crisis of capitalism; and their movement is one aspect of third world peoples' efforts to reclaim and redefine their nations, economies and cultures. This study is meant as a contribution to those efforts.

It began as a background reading for a Third World School that took place at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam in April 1993. As it has been rewritten for publication, three potential audiences for it have been kept in mind: third world socialists and feminists; lesbian and gay activists and scholars in the advanced capitalist countries; and lesbian and gay activists in the third world. Third world socialists and especially feminists are beginning to realize the importance homosexuality for their work. Lesbian and gay scholars in the advanced capitalist countries, who pioneered the use of Marxism and feminism as tools for analyzing homosexuality, are beginning to consider the specificity of homosexuality in the third world. Third world lesbian and gay activists above all should find this study useful for the battles they are waging in their own countries; they should test it, improve on it and move beyond it in the years to come.

This study starts from the assumption that it is useful for activists as well as scholars to study human sexuality undogmatically; pay attention to the facts that careful research uncovers; and always be ready to criticize, change or discard common prejudices and earlier theories. This is particularly hard in the study of sexuality, because of the strength of the ideologies we are taught about it. The ideologies of "common sense" classify all aspects of sexuality as "natural" or "unnatural", "normal" or "abnormal", "moral" or "immoral".

Although many individual Marxists and feminists have unthinkingly fallen into this trap at times, Marxism and feminism as methods are ways to escape from it. They allow us to understand human behaviour and ethics as the product of a long and contradictory process of historical development. Ethics of different societies have differed. Ethics of different groups within the same society can be partly or wholly antagonistic. A moral principle that seems incontestable and natural at a particular time and place—a girl's duty to obey her father, for example, or a woman's duty to obey her husband—can and should be challenged and overturned when social development makes it possible and necessary.

Marxism, Feminism and Sexuality

Before we decide what is right, Marxism and feminism push us to try to understand: what exists; how that which exists came to be; how that which exists is changing; and how people who favour a certain kind of transformation of reality can help bring a new reality into existence. Human sexuality like other aspects of human life has changed, is changing and will continue to change. Our evolving understanding of sexuality is one part of the dynamic process of its transformation.

People often balk at accepting that sexuality is subject to change, because sexuality feels basic in a certain way to our sense of who we are. In particular, it is basic to our sense of ourselves as women and men: which for many of us means our sense of ourselves as strong, healthy, loving, caring, independent, desiring. People fighting for freedom have often said that they are asserting or fighting for their "manhood", which oppressors have stolen from them. These senses of identity and values are deep-rooted. They cannot be changed simply by changing our opinions or lecturing one another. Yet we need to understand how our own basic identities and values are themselves historical and social products, which need to be studied and questioned.

In the 1970s the gay/lesbian liberation movement, the feminist movement and the socialist movement in North America and Europe learned and
re-learned these lessons from one another, in a continuous ferment that was sometimes frustrating but enormously fruitful for all three movements. The socialist movement developed its understanding of sexual politics very largely by learning from feminists and gay/lesbian liberationists; certainly no single current of the left led the struggle for sexual liberation or in the analysis of sexual oppression. On the other hand, the theory and strategy of gay/lesbian liberation were based in large part on a Marxist and feminist approach. This theory and strategy were easily and usefully appropriated by gay/lesbian movements in the third world, which generally arose some years later.

With the decline of the left in the imperialist countries in the 1980s, however, gay/lesbian theorists (and to a lesser extent, gay/lesbian movements) have turned away to some extent from Marxism and feminism. Many have turned toward "post-modern" perspectives such as "queer theory": a difficult-to-define approach that focuses on the diversity of cultural practices and encourages a generalized suspicion of system-building. Queer theory in the US and other imperialist countries has made significant contributions to gay/lesbian analysis and movements. It has re-emphasized the extent to which categories such as "gay" and "lesbian" are social constructs that need to be picked apart, questioned, relativized and even subverted. But it has so far not been widely taken up in the third world, and there are reasons why this should be so. Post-modern theoretical approaches encourage a certain skepticism toward ideas about "progress" and "liberation": ideas that nonetheless appeal strongly to people for whom "progress" can literally be the difference between survival and death.

The Specificity of the Third World

In any event, it is becoming increasingly necessary for gay/lesbian liberation in the third world that analysis and strategy be developed that are specifically adapted to the third world, growing out of third world experience and movements. Some of the potential in Marxism and feminism that is specifically useful for third world gay/lesbian liberation has still not been tapped.

Creating an analysis and strategy for gay/lesbian liberation in the third world is difficult, for several reasons. While "much of the history of homosexuality in the West in the last century has now to an important degree been charted", one Dutch writer points out, "this is only a tiny fraction of the overall history of same-sex unions." Homosexuality in the third world has been studied relatively little. Many of the studies that have been done, mostly during the past decade or so, have been done by people from the imperialist countries. Even lesbian and gay activists and scholars in the third world have sometimes tended, because of strong cultural influence from imperialist countries and the greater resources available in imperialist countries, to translate European and North American works rather than theorizing from their own research and experience.

As a result of all this, the most important works giving overviews of gay/lesbian liberation, the "classics", have almost inevitably been biased toward European and North American experience. Even third world writers who do their own research and analysis tend to rely on these "classics", resulting in a certain neglect of specifically third world issues even in gay/lesbian writings from the third world.

Another problem in developing analysis and strategy for gay/lesbian liberation in the third world is the enormous diversity of third world social formations and cultures. Virtually the only thing that unites third world countries, after all, is domination by imperialism, mainly during the last century or so. This has had a strongly unifying effect (to some extent) on their economic structures; a somewhat lesser impact on some other aspects of their social structures; and perhaps the most diverse and varying effects on aspects of their cultures such as sexuality. No one can claim to synthesize the overwhelming diversity of information uncovered by studies of homosexuality in the third world, even though only a tiny proportion of third world homosexuality has been studied at all. All that this paper can do is highlight certain aspects of homosexuality and certain problems of gay/lesbian liberation which are more or less common to the different third world countries, which arise mostly from the fact of these countries' common domination by imperialism. Even so, any conclusions this paper reaches can only be conjectural. It is written in the hope that it will help spur people—especially people in the third world—to do more research, on the basis of which its conclusions can be tested and revised.
Homosexual behaviour is apparently universal in human societies, across boundaries of time and culture, even though in at least a large minority of societies it has been more or less harshly condemned and/or repressed. Apparently no human society that has been carefully studied has ever been found to yield no evidence at all of homosexuality. One study found that in forty-seven out of seventy-six societies it examined, some form of homosexual behaviour (male and/or female) was considered socially acceptable. But what forms of homosexuality exist and what forms are considered acceptable varies enormously from one society to the next.

Different forms of homosexuality existing in the third world today are unique products of unique histories. Homosexuality among women, often seen as a threat to male domination and harshly punished, has had a less visible history in the third world than homosexuality among men. But both lesbianism and male homosexuality have existed through the ages in the third world, and been transformed as third world societies have been transformed.

The starting points for third world homosexuality were the very varied indigenous sexualities of the cultures that existed in Asia, Africa and the Americas before the age of European world conquest. Different in each culture, these indigenous sexualities can be roughly classified into two broad types. The ancient Hindu culture of South Asia and many indigenous cultures of Africa and the Americas had sexualities of a “berdache” type, in which certain people (most often men) took on social roles and characteristics of the opposite sex. Berdaches often had special religious status and powers attributed to them as well. The civilizations of East Asia and of Islamic Central and West Asia and North Africa, by contrast, had sexualities that were largely age- and status-defined. Male youths and slaves in these cultures sometimes took on a “passive”, “feminine” sexual role.

These indigenous sexualities of the third world are explored in greater detail in Chapter I. Over the centuries they spread from one part of the world to another and interacted in unique ways with one another. For example, Islamic-linked age-defined homosexuality spread to South Asia, where it has co-existed with traditional berdache-type homosexuality; and West African berdache-type homosexuality came on slave ships to the Caribbean and Brazil, where it has persisted underground in Christian-dominated cultures. Indigenous third world sexualities, often harshly persecuted by European rulers, endure, to a greater or lesser extent and in more or less altered forms, in the third world today.

In the past five centuries, the varied third world sexual cultures have been overlaid and interlinked by European and North American conquest and domination. In this process indigenous sexualities have often been suppressed or reshaped, while different European and North American forms of homosexuality have been imposed or imported. European and North American forms of homosexuality were themselves products of six centuries of development, summarized in Chapter II: development that was linked to the emergence of capitalism from European feudalism, the bourgeois revolutions, and industrialization. The forms of homosexuality that developed in Europe and North America—which this study calls “proto-gay” homosexuality and “modern gay/lesbian” homosexuality—were different from any of the third world’s indigenous sexualities.

Proto-gay homosexuality, which was notably brought to Latin America by the Spanish and Portuguese from the fifteenth century onwards, resembled berdache-type homosexuality in that it involved certain people’s taking on social roles and characteristics of the opposite sex. But it differed from any traditional berdache-type homosexuality in that it was largely urban; largely detached from rather than integrated into traditional kinship networks; more or less associated with prostitution for money rather than any kind of socially sanctioned marriage; and at odds with instead of sanctioned by the dominant religion. This proto-gay type of homosexuality put down deep roots in Latin America, and also seems to have influenced parts of Asia such as the Philippines and Thailand.

Modern gay/lesbian homosexuality is a much more recent development. It began only in the nineteenth century, after industrialization, beginning in imperialist countries such as Britain and Germany. The growth of larger gay/lesbian communities over the past century in Europe and North America meant replacement of the proto-gay pattern of sexuality, polarized between “masculine” and “feminine” partners, with a more equitable pattern. It also meant a new kind of marking off of lesbians and gay men. Lesbians and gay men acquired identities and formed communities that were more sharply demarcated from a majority that was now, for the first time, explicitly defined as “heterosexual”.

As explained in Chapter III, modern gay/lesbian communities have arisen later and been more limited in the third world than in imperialist countries, for several reasons: later and more limited industrialization; later entry of women into the paid labour force; greater strength of family structures due
in part to less developed welfare states; and poverty, which limits most third world lesbians’ and gay men’s participation in a gay ghetto founded on consumption. Yet modern gay/lesbian communities have nonetheless grown up in the third world, more and more quickly in recent decades. While European or North American influence may at times have facilitated the emergence of third world gay/lesbian communities, the process of capitalist development inside third world countries has been at least as important. If anything, third world dependence on imperialist economies has helped to delay development of the material basis for third world gay/lesbian communities. 7

The homosexualities of the contemporary third world are thus unique and varied combinations of four different types of homosexuality: traditional berdache-type; traditional age- and status-defined; European proto-gay; and modern gay/lesbian. This study tries to give some sense of the historically shifting kaleidoscope of third world homosexualities; of their meaning for people’s lives; and above all, for movements for sexual liberation in the third world.

Today gay/lesbian movements exist in at least fifty-two countries, including many countries of the third world. In Africa, for example, gay/lesbian movements are known to exist in Egypt, Ghana, Liberia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. 8 This study argues that third world gay/lesbian movements are not aping a Western fashion, but defending authentic, legitimate and enduring third world communities against their rulers’ reactionary policies. Third world lesbians and gay men are expressing the human desires and needs of people who are, just as much as Europeans and North Americans, caught up in worldwide economic and social developments.

At the same time, this study tries to show that third world lesbians and gay men cannot and will not simply follow a path that gay/lesbian movements in the imperialist countries have already mapped out. Chapters IV and VI try to indicate the unique problems that third world gay/lesbian movements have to wrestle with, and the unique potential they may have to help in the social transformation of their countries. Third world lesbians and gay men, who have learned from their European and North American sisters’ and brothers’ movements without mimicking them in building full-fledged gay ghettos, may yet outstrip them in finding new ways to gay/lesbian liberation.
I. Indigenous Homosexualities of the Third World

Colonial and dependent societies all have their indigenous sexual cultures, including indigenous homosexuality, which preceded their contact with European imperialism. Given the enormous diversity of indigenous third world sexualities, this study cannot possibly give an overview of them. It can just some make general points and focus on a few examples, particularly on indigenous forms which have been important in one way or another to later homosexual development in the third world.

One characteristic that almost all human societies have shared for at least several thousand years has been male domination. As a result female sexuality has been shaped to a male-dominated pattern. In almost all male-dominated societies at least some forms of female homosexuality have been seen as sexuality escaping male control, and have therefore been repressed.

In fact many or most of the tools that men have to oppress women in any way can also be seen as tools for the repression of female homosexuality: "men's ability to deny women sexuality or force it upon them; to command or exploit their labor to control their produce; to control or rob them of their children; to confine them physically and prevent their movement; to use them as objects in male transactions; to cramp their creativeness; or to withhold from them large areas of society's knowledge and cultural attainments". "The enforcement of heterosexuality for women" can be seen "as a means of assuring male rights of physical, economical, and emotional access."

On the other hand, male-dominated societies have tended to segregate women from men in order to keep them apart from power and out of activities restricted to men; to have women cooperate in carrying out the kinds of work assigned to them; and to keep them away from men other than their particular fathers, husbands or masters. Male-dominated societies have thus tended to promote female bonding at the same time that they have seen female bonding as a threat.

Female bonding, including female sexual bonding, has the potential in male-dominated societies to be felt as or seen as a form of women's resistance, "both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life". Some lesbian feminists have seen the entire range of forms of women's bonding against male domination, "in every culture and in every period", as existing on a "lesbian continuum", of which sex between women is only one important aspect. Even women who are married or centrally involved with men can be seen from this perspective as leading a "double life", in which less visible emotional and erotic bonds with women may be as important or more important to them.

The forms that male homosexuality can take in male-dominated societies are more varied and complex. Male-dominated societies generally expect all women to be submissive, at least in relation to men of their own class or social position; but they do not necessarily expect all men to be dominant, socially or sexually. Domination of men over women can go together with and even reinforce other kinds of domination by some men over others. Male bonding, including male sexual bonding, can be compatible with many kinds of relations of dominance.

Gender, Kinship and Lesbianism

On the other hand, male homosexuality cannot be allowed to undermine the economic power or the behaviour that is considered appropriate for dominant males. Every culture in which men dominate women has developed masculine and feminine gender roles: ways of looking and acting that are considered "normal" for women or "normal" for men. These "masculine" and "feminine" roles vary considerably from culture to culture, and go far beyond biologically given differences between human males and females. Male-dominated societies also establish a sexual division of labour between men and women, which preceded any division of labour based on classes and remains economically important long after the development of classes. Elaborate and economically important kinship systems—social and economic networks based on either biological or invented family ties—often arise on the basis of this sexual division of labour.

If and when homosexuality is tolerated in male-dominated societies, it has to be adapted to and ideologically justified in terms of these gender and kinship systems. Kinship and gender were particularly important in pre-capitalist societies, since the family was often an important production unit and the sexual division of labour was a major division of labour. Lesbianism, which tended to be seen as threatening to male-dominated gender and kinship systems, was subject to extremely widespread repression.

As noted above, many of the forms of oppression that women experience in male-dominated
societies, including many of the worst ones, can be seen in part as directed specifically against lesbianism. Clitoridectomy (“female circumcision”) in some parts of the Islamic world, for example, as wholesale a denial and attack on women’s sexuality as can be imagined, is usually portrayed as a means of ensuring that women do not seek out sexual relations with men other than their husbands. But it is also a form of insurance against lesbianism, all the more necessary in polygamous households where women are segregated together. Widow-burning in India can also be seen in part as a way of denying women’s autonomous existence apart from men, and of guarding against women’s capacity to bond intensely with people other than their husbands.

Even male homosexuality requires peculiar ideological forms in order to fit into pre-capitalist gender systems: most commonly, either identification of a minority of men as some kind of berdaches, or organization of homosexuality along lines of age and status. The next few pages give some examples of indigenous homosexualities, both berdache-type and age- and status-defined. Each of these indigenous homosexualities later ended up playing an important role in shaping contemporary third world homosexualities.

**Berdaches and Eunuchs**

One of the most common forms of male homosexuality indigenous to the third world was the institution of berdaches: men who in some magical way were given the social roles and attributes of women, often playing special religious, military and/or social roles as a result of this transformation. Male berdaches in different societies could be “wives” of other men, or more or less honoured prostitutes, or asexual. Berdache-type homosexuality fits well into family- and village-centered cultures, and was often enshrined in traditional religion.

A berdache type of homosexuality is a strong tradition in India, for example, with ancient roots in Hindu religion. Indian cultural traditions are in some ways accepting of androgyny (joining together of maleness and femaleness), for example in the androgynous character of major Hindu deities such as Siva. South Asian culture, while traditionally constraining women’s public life severely, nonetheless seems not to associate masculinity with breaking free from the mother and with machismo as much as many other cultures. In any event, imagery of same-gender sex can be found on thousand-year-old Indian temples in Khajuraho and Konark.

The Indian berdache-type *hijra* was (and still is) traditionally conceived as a hermaphrodite (a person with both male and female sexual organs) from birth, though it is doubtful that most *hijras* were in fact born hermaphrodites. Those who were not born hermaphrodites were (and apparently are still) emasculated by other *hijras*, with those living as *hijras* but resisting emasculation facing disapproval and pressure. They always dressed as women. They were supposed to be under the protection of the goddess Bahuchara Mata, to have the power to bless or curse, and to live together in groups under the direction of a *hijra* guru. Economically, they functioned as paid performers at weddings and births, as shampooers, and to some extent as prostitutes: the fourth- or fifth-century *Kama Sutra* mentions eunuchs (among others) in its detailed instructions for oral sex (*Aparishataka*).

Another example of berdache-type male homosexuality existed in the ancient Dahomey and Yoruba cultures of West Africa, whose religions included belief in possession by deities of the opposite gender. We will return to this example because of the way it has partially survived among African communities in the Americas.

Berdaches were most common in pre-state societies, and were often suppressed as states emerged in the Americas and Africa. There is evidence that berdaches existed among some indigenous Mexican peoples, for example, particularly in Juchitán in Oaxaca, in Michoacán, and among the Huastecos and Totonacos of Veracruz and Puebla. Homosexuality is reputedly less stigmatized among some of these native peoples even today than in other indigenous Mexican communities. But harsh repression of homosexuality and of the cross-dressing associated with it became characteristic of ancient Mexico with the rise of the Aztec empire. One scholar suggests that Aztec intolerance went together with a spirit of militarist machismo. It might also have been an assertion of superiority over conquered peoples among whom berdaches had been more common. Aztec intolerance may still be reflected in the treatment of Mexican lesbians and gay men today.

**Beloved Youths**

More common than berdaches in pre-capitalist social formations founded on slave- or tribute-based economies was age-defined or status-defined male homosexuality, in which males taking “feminine” roles were supposed to be either younger than or socially inferior to other men who had sex with them. Anthropologists have found this kind of male homosexuality in many Amazonian and Melanesian cultures. More important for this study, this was the most common form of homosexuality in the southern European countries of Greek or Latin culture along the northern Mediterranean, in the Persian/Arab/Islamic world, and in the empires and kingdoms of East Asia.

Despite explicit condemnations of male homosexuality in the Koran, for example, homoeroticism pervaded much of mediaeval Arabic
love poetry, and appeared in such classics as the *Thousand and One Nights*. "It is probably fair to say that most premodern Arabic poetry is ostensibly homosexual", one scholar notes: "There is the sort of love men have for their wives, which is good but not passionate; and there is the sort of love men have for each other, which is passionate but not good." References to male homosexuality in mediaeval Arabic sources fell fairly clearly into an age-defined pattern: when the beloved was not a youth between fifteen and twenty years old, he was almost always either a slave or an androgyne (person of indeterminate sex). 18

This kind of homosexuality apparently spread with the spread of Arab/Persian/Islamic culture: for example into the Indian subcontinent, where it was celebrated by classical Urdu and Sufi poets. The first Moghul emperor of India, Babar, wrote love poems in the Islamic tradition to his beloved boy favourite Baburi, and there is evidence of other, similar relationships in aristocratic circles in eighteenth-century Delhi. 19 Thus pre-colonial India like pre-colonial Mexico provides an example of a complex combination of indigenous sexual cultures: in India, a coexistence of berdache-type Hindu-linked homosexuality with age-defined Islamic-linked homosexuality; in Mexico, harsh suppression of homosexuality indigenous to one culture through conquest by another.

Another pre-capitalist culture with a tradition of largely age-defined or status-defined homosexuality was ancient China. Traditions there of male homosexuality, called the "love of the shared peach" or "love of the cut sleeve" after romantic stories from Confucian-era sources, date back thousands of years. All ten emperors of the Western Han dynasty, two thousand years ago, had at least one male lover or otherwise showed homosexual inclinations. Confucianism did condemn homosexual desire or behaviour sternly if it reached the point of interfering with men's family, civic or religious duties, however. Such condemnations were likely to surface particularly in periods of "rectification of names" (moral renovation) following the ascension of a new dynasty. It was in this context, during the Qing dynasty's first century, that consensual sex between men was outlawed (for the first time) in 1740. 20 The prohibition would make it somewhat more plausible for China's later Communist rulers to reject homosexuality as a Western import.

Indigenous forms of homosexuality survive into the modern third world, but rarely in pure form. With the European conquest and/or domination of increasing areas of the Americas, Africa and Asia, beginning in the late fifteenth century, these indigenous forms were combined with forms imposed or introduced by Europeans: in particular, what this study calls proto-gay and modern gay/lesbian forms of homosexuality. Several gay/lesbian writers, often working from a Marxist and feminist perspective, have concluded that the originally European and North American forms of homosexuality arose out of the development of capitalism. In order to understand lesbian and gay life in the third world, we should have some understanding of how gay/lesbian communities arose in the first capitalist countries.
II. Capitalism and Gay/Lesbian Identity

While homosexuality has existed in a great diversity of social forms in a plethora of human societies, a category of people called "homosexuals" has existed in almost none of them. The word "homosexual" was only coined in the nineteenth century. "The creation of a specific person known as 'the homosexual' is a product of modern Western societies and runs contrary to traditional mores and values in even strongly heteroerotic societies." Only the development of capitalism over the past several centuries has given rise to a specific, modern gay/lesbian identity, community and movement.

Gay men and lesbians have not always existed. Instead, they are a product of history, and have come into existence in a specific historical era. Their emergence is associated with the relations of capitalism; it has been the historical development of capitalism—more specifically, its free labor system—that has allowed large numbers of men and women in the late twentieth century to call themselves gay, to see themselves as part of a community of similar men and women, and to organize politically on the basis of that identity. 21

In order to understand the creation of gay/lesbian communities in the third world today, however, we have to understand that the first gay/lesbian communities did not spring into existence overnight, in exactly their contemporary forms, at the moment of the bourgeois revolutions. These communities grew up through a long process in Europe and North America that took at least 600 years, beginning in European societies that were still feudal. Only in the last hundred years of this 600-year process, long after capitalism was firmly established in the Netherlands, Britain, France and North America, have gay/lesbian communities emerged in their distinctively modern form. We need to look carefully at this process, considering it in two broadly defined stages: a "proto-gay" stage that began with the generalization of commodity production and exchange under European feudalism; and a "modern gay" stage that began after the emergence of a mass, industrial working class.

Sexuality in European feudal societies was centered on the sexual submission of wives to husbands in marriage, which was seen as one among many divinely ordained, hierarchical, personal relationships that made up the social order. With the generalization of commodity production and exchange in the later centuries of European feudalism, however, hierarchies based purely on personal fealty were undermined. Among the feudal nobility in regions of France and Italy where commodity relations were most highly developed, the concept of "courtly" love arose. The poets who celebrated courtly love more or less consciously described it as an emotion independent of or even in contradiction to the compulsory, religiously and socially sanctioned institution of marriage. Love, according to these bearers of the new ideology, was often or usually adulterous. 22

Romantic love was portrayed at first as part of the aristocratic world of leisure, literacy and "honour", which had nothing to do with "commoners". But it found echoes in other parts of feudal societies. In Christian monasteries, where homosexuality had always been an obvious possibility, some monks began to idealize friendships between them in terms that were erotic as well as religious. 23 Shifts in sexual patterns among the nobility and clergy were also echoed, though in very different ways, in the new cities that grew up. Some people in these cities escaped from the categories of lord and serf, or even from the guild categories of master, journeyman and apprentice. In the cities too it became possible to engage in and imagine sexual relations based partly on desire rather than on established socio-sexual hierarchies.

At the bottom and in the margins of feudal societies, a few men and women in the cities became more or less detached from the kinship structures that went together with the feudal social order. Prostitution spread—mainly female, but also sometimes male. Men who were not prostitutes but living outside mediaeval family structures could sometimes coexist with prostitutes in an urban sexual underground. The objective possibility arose, for the first time under feudalism, for male homosexuality to be not just an occasional sin or recreation indulged in by men otherwise firmly locked into family and social structures, but (for a few) a more or less continuous way of life. Covert communities of men living homosexual lives are known to have existed in northern Italy as early as the fourteenth century, in France as early as the fifteenth century, and in England as early as the seventeenth century. 24

Because of the continuity between these first homosexual undergrounds and today's gay/lesbian communities, we can call this a "proto-gay" stage in the development of homosexuality. But these proto-gay undergrounds were not simple precursors of today's gay/lesbian communities in Paris or London.
Even where they existed they were a tiny minority of the population, so that most men who engaged in some kind of homosexual behaviour cannot have fully belonged to them. They were often subject to brutality and repression, especially since feudalism went into crisis in the fourteenth century and persecutions of Jews, Muslims, Gypsies, "witches" and other scapegoats intensified. Surrounded as these proto-gay communities were by male-dominated, hierarchical societies—at first feudal societies, later capitalist societies recently emerged from feudalism—the men who belonged to them would tend to model their sexual relationships on those of the larger society. Not qualifying as "proper men" by the larger society’s standards, they were likely to take on social, sexual and gender roles analogous to those assigned to women.

**Personal Life after the Bourgeois Revolutions**

As long as these proto-gay communities in Europe were small, and the larger society’s rigid gender roles influenced them strongly, sex between the men involved in them would tend to be seen as strange or unsatisfying, since the two gender roles considered necessary for “real” sex would not be present in sex between “feminine” men. But sex between men in these communities was always at least a possibility. The possibility grew into a probability with two later changes following bourgeois revolutions in Europe and North America: (a) changing family structures and gender roles in the larger societies; (b) industrialization, which by the nineteenth century multiplied the size of cities, and thus the size of urban populations detached from traditional family structures, many times over.

The rise of capitalism brought about a sea change in family life. The late sixteenth-century Dutch revolution, the mid-seventeenth-century English revolution and the late eighteenth-century French revolution disintegrated the feudal relationships that had been the basis of European economies, cultures and sexualities. Beginning with fringe groups like the Quakers (originally part of the English revolution’s far left wing), people questioned husbands’ previously unquestionable authority and began promoting reciprocity and affection as essential to marriage and sex. The ideology of love based on desire and free choice, which under feudalism was largely limited to the nobility and associated with adultery, was adapted under capitalism to become the foundation of bourgeois marriage.

As capitalism developed into industrial capitalism beginning in late eighteenth-century England, the family declined as a production unit, since many things formerly produced (largely by women) at home were now bought as commodities. The role of the family shifted from production to "reproduction": bearing and raising children to join the waged labour force, and organizing consumption for those already in the waged labour force. Sometimes women, even married women, had to do wage labour as well, which brought them somewhat further out of their domestic worlds into the public sphere as autonomous people. Capitalism gradually became dependent on mass consumption, at first in the nineteenth century by the petty bourgeoisie, then in the later twentieth century (in the imperialist countries) by the working class. The family became integral to capitalism as a place where both consumption and reproduction took place.

Yet the family was a world apart from the rest of capitalist society, both because of the “personal” nature of family relationships as contrasted with the impersonal market and because of the “freedom” of consumption and leisure as contrasted with the necessity of work. Notions of love, desire and free choice, having first trickled down from the nobility and been adapted by the bourgeoisie, slowly became the basis of middle-class and working-class family life.

Much as working people under capitalism “freely” chose their jobs, “people increasingly enter into sexual relations with each other as ‘free’ individuals”. Instead of marrying people chosen for them, people began marrying spouses they had chosen themselves; later, instead of remaining married for life, they could choose whether to remain married or not; eventually, instead of just having sex inside their marriages, they could have sex with other people and in other ways if they wanted to. Even women began to win some freedom in their personal lives in imperialist countries by the late nineteenth century, although it was only early in the twentieth century that “respectable” women could be seen in public without men. Sexuality, formerly seen not even as a separate entity but as only an aspect of legitimate marriage or of suspicious nonconformity, was now seen as “a means of establishing intimacy, promoting happiness, and experiencing pleasure”.

Yet the new sexual freedom under capitalism, like other forms of freedom under capitalism, existed only in particularly capitalist forms. Once people were apparently free to choose their sexual relationships, their sexual desires might range more widely; but in a society where material resources and power were not equitably shared or democratically controlled, people’s desires shaped or accommodated themselves to the realities of what they had the money and power to do. They might have had more freedom (once they were adults) to choose their families, for example, but their dependence on the family as an institution was not chosen. The (redefined) family was still the place in capitalist society in which people were fed, sheltered, physically cared for and emotionally nurtured—through someone’s (usually women’s) unpaid labour. People’s sexuality had to accommodate
itself to this reality.

The accommodation of sexuality took the form in particular of sexual fetishism. Much as the development of capitalism tempted working people increasingly to fetishize commodities, to imagine that earning more and buying the "right" things would make them happy, people were tempted to believe that they would find happiness by finding the "right" spouse or sexual partner. Since the forms of their social and sexual life were ultimately outside their control, they tended to focus on the individual choices they could make. The ideological productions of developed consumer societies encouraged increasing specificity, and sometimes diversity, about sexually desirable characteristics: age, body type, hair colour, etc. "We come increasingly to be carriers of particular fetishized sexualities.... We acquire a 'sexual identity.'" 26

Emergence of Gay/Lesbian Communities

Even the gender of a sexual partner, once something that was dictated by the dominant kinship system, became a possible choice and criterion of self-identification. Homosexuality, which in the proto-gay pattern was still for most people a form of behaviour on the margins of the dominant heterosexuality, became for the first time the domain of a specifically and systematically identified set of people. By the late nineteenth century these social developments gave rise in imperialist countries (notably Britain and Germany) to what we can consider in retrospect the first "modern" gay/lesbian communities: that is, communities in which lesbian women were expected to have their main sexual and emotional ties with one another and gay men were expected to have their main sexual and emotional ties with one another.

Men and women in these communities might continue for decades to model their relationships on the older, proto-gay pattern of relationships and on bifurcated gender roles. But potentially, and increasingly in reality, lesbian women and gay men could enter into relationships in which "male" and "female" roles and "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics tended to be divided more equally, or randomly, or according to the partners' impulses, or simply to be less stressed or even acknowledged.

With sexual and emotional ties now contained increasingly within gay/lesbian communities, these communities could increasingly develop their own distinctive subcultures, sub-economies, and institutions. But the extent to which this was possible depended on the larger societies that surrounded them.

Much as the crisis of feudalism led to repression against mediaeval proto-gay communities, capitalist crisis has led to repression against modern gay/lesbian communities. Under feudalism, sexual nonconformity was seen as a threat to religion and the hierarchical social order; under capitalism, sexual nonconformity has been seen as a threat to the family. Since the continual expansion of commodity relations under capitalism undermines the non-commodity family relationships on which the reproduction of the labour force depends, social pressure builds up to preserve the family from perceived threats to it. Independent women, particularly lesbians, and gay men become scapegoats. 27 The long economic depression of 1873-96, which gave rise in Europe to a wave of anti-Semitism, nationalism and imperialism, also gave rise to persecution of gay people.

Repression and Response

The scale of repression against lesbians and gay men since the beginning of the imperialist period is hard to credit, particularly since one effect of the repression is silencing of the evidence of lesbians' and gay men's existence and oppression. But repression has been pervasive. One catalogue of the forms that the repression has taken only since 1900 lists: denial of our existence, forced labor and physical extermination in concentration camps, denial of civil rights, assassinations at the hands of both right-wing and left-wing death squads, censorship, imprisonment, castration, forced internment in psychiatric institutions, the barring of parents from raising their children, state hangings, dismissals from jobs and the military, family rejection, shock therapy, forced registration by the state, government-sanctioned torture, prison rape, threats of eternal damnation from religious leaders, evictions from houses of worship, and random street beatings. 28

This repression has continually, if unevenly, been met with gay/lesbian resistance. A key early example was the founding of the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in Germany in 1897, partly in response to the persecution in England of Oscar Wilde. This was the beginning of the gay/lesbian movement. The movement's development has been linked to the larger balance of repression and resistance in capitalist society, however: it almost disappeared in the 1930s with the triumph of fascism and Stalinism. Only in 1953, with the founding of the Mattachine Society in the US, in part as a response to persecution of gay people under McCarthyism, did the movement begin a new period of development, leading up to the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion and the emergence of gay/lesbian liberation strictly defined. 29

From the beginning the gay/lesbian movement was linked to the women's movement: from the 1890s to the 1930s to the first wave of feminism, and since the 1960s to the second wave of feminism. By the 1970s, gay/lesbian liberationists in their own way and from their own standpoint were helping to develop the basic feminist critique of gender roles and family. Because "gay people are oppressed by our inability—or refusal—to be 'proper' women or men", the most radical wing of the gay/lesbian movement saw it as a
"challenge to the existing configuration of gender". The ultimate demand inherent in gay/lesbian struggles was defined as the "abolition of gender". Transitional demands intended to advance that objective have included proposals for socializing the functions of the family (childcare, health care, education, housing, culture); for treating children and young people as "autonomous human beings"; and for building an "affectional community" where "autonomy and security do not preclude each other but coexist". 30
III. Combined and Uneven Development of Homosexuality

The indigenous homosexualities of the third world have often been combined with other sexualities that were products of European or North American development. Particularly with the advent of classic imperialism late in the nineteenth century, there was also a tendency for forms of homosexuality brought by Europeans to develop somewhat differently in the third world than they did in Europe or North America. The range of homosexualities that exists in the third world today can only be understood as products of this combined and uneven development.

In Latin America above all, given how early European domination occurred, how thoroughly the indigenous peoples were subjugated or even exterminated, how important European colonial settlement was, and how profoundly Latin American culture has continued to be influenced by European and North American culture, almost all sexuality during the past five centuries has been the product of different forms of combined and uneven sexual development, with imported sexualities being particularly important. In South Asia, ruled by the British for only about two centuries; Africa, most of which was ruled from Europe for less than a century; and East Asia, most of which never experienced direct colonial rule, imported sexualities are relatively less important. But economic subordination is a central fact of life for the entire third world, and this fact has had a lasting impact on indigenous as well as imported sexual patterns. The idea of returning to a completely national or non-Western sexuality is now utopian everywhere.

Since the forms and histories of the third world’s domination by imperialism have varied greatly, the forms of combined and uneven sexual development have also varied greatly. We can sort out the wealth of material we have about third world homosexualities, according to a very rough schema, into five rough patterns, several of which have often coexisted in shaping the sexualities of particular countries and even of particular individuals. These five patterns are:

1. The suppression of indigenous homosexualities, in cases where the third world’s original homosexual customs were simply wiped out along with its original ways of life—sometimes along with its original inhabitants.
2. The adaptation of indigenous homosexualities, where indigenous homosexualities survived and were adapted to the requirements of dependent capitalist development.
3. The imposition or importation of European homosexualities, either through the blatant coercion of conquest and enslavement or through overwhelming economic and social pressures.
4. The retention of proto-gay homosexuality in the third world, because of underdevelopment and the consequent lack of the material basis for modern gay/lesbian communities, after it began to die out in Europe and North America.
5. Social and political repression of homosexuality, as part of the process of development of modern family structures in the third world—which engenders, finally: Gay/lesbian resistance to repression and the emergence of distinctive third world gay/lesbian movements.

Exterminating Sodomites

1. Throughout much of the history of European conquests in the Americas, Asia and Africa, but especially in regions of intensive settler colonialism, the imposition of European rule went together with the imposition of European sexual mores. To the extent that the European conquerors came from bourgeois societies, conquest meant the imposition of bourgeois sexual mores—which meant bourgeois hypocrisy. On the one hand, the sexual customs of the conquered peoples were often repressed on the grounds that they were brutal, primitive, un-Christian or immoral. On the other hand, the overwhelming power of the conquerors over the conquered meant that they could impose new customs whose cruelty or coerciveness often exceeded what third world peoples had experienced before.

The Christian puritanism brought by the Europeans often meant repression of central institutions of third world kinship systems, such as polygamy. It very often meant repression of indigenous third world homosexualities. Because pre-state peoples such as those of most of North America were particularly vulnerable to European conquest and domination, the homosexualities existing among them (often of the berdache type) were most likely to disappear through subjugation, conversion and assimilation. “Stigmatization of woman-marriages and of the institution of the berdache is an imported phenomenon” in general, “through colonialism, religion and present-day governments.”

The existence of homosexuality among the indigenous peoples of the Americas was even used as a pretext for exterminating them, or at the very least for conquering, dispossessing and converting them, by the Spanish. The same pretext was used in North America, particularly during the US conquest of the
West in 1880-1910. In Brazil at least one slave was accused before the Inquisition in 1591-93 of having brought the practice of “passive sodomy” from the area of modern Angola or Zaïre. 32

Prohibitions of homosexuality originally imposed by European conquerors or slaveowners were often internalized over time by the conquered or enslaved peoples. By the time slavery was abolished in the British colony of Jamaica, for example, most Jamaicans had adopted a moralistic Protestantism and rejection of homosexuality. Gay men—who did nonetheless exist in Jamaica—were sometimes stoned as late as the early twentieth century (though paradoxically, it was possible in Jamaica for a few “man royal” women—in fact lesbians—to survive economically and socially apart from men and outside of marriage, as semi-outcasts in a proto-gay pattern). A Jamaican-Canadian lesbian has put forward an explanation of the stigma placed on these lesbians and gay men:

Under slavery, production and reproduction were inextricably linked. Reproduction served not only to increase the labor force of slave owners but also, by ’domesticating’ the enslaved, facilitated the process of social control. Simultaneously, the enslaved responded to dehumanizing conditions by focusing on those aspects of life in which they could express their own desires. Sex was an area in which to articulate one’s humanity but, because it was tied to attempts ‘to define oneself as human’, gender roles, as well as the act of sex, became badges of status. To be male was to be the stud, the procreator; to be female was to be fecund, and one’s femininity was measured by the ability to attract and hold a man and to bear children. In this way, slavery and the postemancipation colonial orders defined the structures of patriarchy and heterosexuality as necessary for social mobility and acceptance. 33

Similar impulses to assert gender roles and build families existed in all the slavery-based societies of the Americas. Among Jamaicans, these impulses grew so strong that eventually homosexuality could be dismissed there as “a white people ting” or “a ting only people with mixed blood was involved”. 34

The Staying Power of Indigenous Homosexualities

(2) Indigenous sexualities have usually not been completely wiped out by imperialism, however, particularly given Europeans’ failure or sometimes lack of interest in converting African and Asian colonized peoples to Christianity. Even in the Americas, where Christianity of one brand or another became the dominant religion almost everywhere, elements of the dominated peoples’ cultures, religions and sexualities showed remarkable staying power. Enslaved Africans transplanted to the Americas, for example, despite the suppression of their languages and political and social structures, nonetheless kept elements of their original cultures, a fact that scholars have only recently acknowledged.

Some observers suggest that most of the tolerance for homosexuality that exists in Haiti today might reflect the belief in possession by deities of the opposite gender in the voudou religion. Gay Haitians themselves, condemned by the Haitian Catholic church, seek out the relative freedom of voudou celebrations as well as the relative freedom of annual Carnaval parades. The belief in cross-gender possession found in voudou, along with belief in deities that are themselves androgynous, is found in the candomble religion that originated about 1830 in Bahia, Brazil, many of whose inhabitants were, like Haiti’s, slaves brought from the ancient Dahomeyan kingdom of West Africa. In Cuba, Santeria (derived mainly from Yoruba religion) “was and still is a favored form of gender transcendence for many Cuban homosexual men and lesbians.” 35

All these forms of homosexuality are survivals of indigenous West African sexualities of the berdache type. Ironically, the berdaches that Europeans suppressed among indigenous American peoples seem to have come to the Americas on the Europeans’ own slave ships.

Survival of the indigenous, mediaeval homosexual sexuality of the Arab/Islamic world is reflected in the fact that male homosexuality is reputed to be common in North Africa and the Middle East today, despite the virtual nonexistence of gay communities. This is sometimes attributed to the great difficulty of premartial or extramarital sex between males and females in many Arab countries. One recent authority writes, “Pederasty between children or young people does not give rise to great indignation”; another adds that male homosexuality “continues to fuel Maghrebian fantasies”. 36 Popular Egyptian and other Arab male singers of the 1950s and 1960s still used the word “beloved” in the masculine form, even when the songs ostensibly referred to female beloveds. Similar patterns seem to persist in an Islamic country such as Pakistan, where male prostitution is common in a city like Karachi and less policed than extramarital heterosexuality.

“We Loved Our Boys Better”

South Africa provides a fascinating example of the adaptation of an indigenous form of heterosexuality to a later, independently developed form of homosexuality under the impact of dependent capitalist development. Indigenous cultures of southern Africa had a common form of premartial sexual play (called metska in Xhosa and hlobongo in Zulu), which avoided impregnation through “intercrural” sex (penetration between the thighs). Older African men who came to work in the South
African gold mines, at least from the 1900s to the 1970s, practiced *metsha* with younger miners who became their “mine wives”. The “wives” took care of the home, took care to look “feminine” (in this case, beardless and fat), and were submissive and avoided orgasm in sex, while the “husbands” gave them gifts, clothes and money in return. 37

The “husbands” would sometimes go off to town to visit female prostitutes (which was allowed in the gold mines, though not the diamond mines), but in one “husband”’s words “just spent a few hours with our girlfriends and then returned to our boys. We loved them better.” The system allowed men from traditional villages—both “husbands” and “wives”—to avoid losing their rural roots and to go back home with money to set up traditional homesteads (*umzis*). White mine managers usually condoned the system to keep the peace; there were even white miners who took up *metsha* (with African underlings). Management interference resulted at least once in a strike and demonstration by African miners. 38

Homosexual relationships and activism in India have also found points of support in indigenous heterosexual traditions. Two Indian policewomen near Bhopal married each other in 1987 in a Hindu temple. Initially purged from the police, they were later reinstated: the police commissioner cited the Hindu definition of marriage as a “union of two souls” and said that souls have no gender! Their daring was emulated by other women, who found other points of support in Indian culture: two schoolteachers in Gujarat, for example, registered their union as a “*Maitrikarar*”, a “marriage of friendship” traditionally entered into by married businessmen and their mistresses. The indigenous tradition of *hijras* has also not only been preserved in rural India but adapted to urban India, as shown by the relative frequency of sex-change operations even among urban, educated, middle-class Indian men. 39

One pernicious way in which indigenous forms of homosexuality can be adapted to the modern world, in cultures where passive homosexuality in men is traditionally stigmatized, is by using male homosexual rape against social inferiors, prisoners or enemy troops. Allegations of such homosexual rape are usually impossible to check. But at the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, for example, such charges circulated as rumors on both sides: from one side, that rich Kuwaiti men had raped (and killed) Arab immigrant boys; from the other, that invading Iraqi soldiers had raped male Kuwaiti citizens. 40 Whatever the truth or falsehood of such rumors, they suggest one way in which the most reactionary aspects of traditional sexual repression can be combined with modern militarism.

“In the Tropics There Is No Sin”

(3) The flip side of Europeans’ attempts to suppress indigenous homosexualities in the third world was the imposition or importation of European or North American forms of sexuality. Usually the sexuality imposed was heterosexual; but not always. The imposition of European homosexuality, though contrary to the conquerors’ religions and official policies, could take brutal, coercive and sometimes blatant forms. Many kinds of sexuality characterized by inequalities of power were able to flourish in American or African countries where European conquerors and slaveholders had virtually boundless power over those they owned or ruled. Among the Portuguese and Dutch in Brazil, for example, it was said that “infra equinoxalem nihil peccari”: “in the tropics there is no sin” (at least by white people). Slaveowners were able to force their slaves into sexual submission or prostitution (for the slaveowners’ benefit, of course). 41

The abolition of slavery and virtual disappearance of formal colonialism has ended most of these more blatant forms of sexual coercion in the third world. But it has not ended the imposition or importation of European (and now North American and Japanese) sexualities. In recent decades increased ease and lower costs of transportation have expanded the possibilities for “sex tourism” in the third world, mostly heterosexual but also sometimes homosexual. Third world people who have “freely” chosen to cater to this tourism have usually submitted to the veiled coercion of poverty; and while not all work in the sex trade has been outright prostitution, much of it has been.

At the same time that “imperialism has dramatically increased the role of prostitution,” it “often makes for very demeaning and racist exploitation.” With the export of modern gay sexuality from the imperialist countries has gone the export of characteristically modern capitalist forms of sexual fetishism. Thus in the third world there is “fetishisation of the sexual capacities of the dominated peoples by heterosexual and gay men of the rich countries: the ‘passive’ East Asian, the ‘passionate’ Latin American. The racism of this sexuality is obvious.” This kind of tourist racism can reinforce patterns of racism that took root earlier in colonial cultures—such as racism among Mexican gay men against native people—or patterns of prejudice that were originally independent of European racism—such as the centuries-old South Asian association of beauty with light skin. 42

In every continent, certain third world cities have become centers of sex tourism and often particularly of homosexual tourism. Pre-revolutionary Havana, for example, was “a city largely devoted to tourism, catering to the ‘vices’ of American visitors....
In prerevolutionary Cuba, American dollars could buy cheap labor, a malleable dictator, prostitutes of both sexes, and an atmosphere of sensuous sexuality. Cities noted for sex tourism, including homosexual tourism, today include Tangiers (Morocco), Bangkok, Manila, Santo Domingo and San Juan (Puerto Rico). Gay men from North America and Europe often come as tourists to Carnival in Rio. 43

The sex trade does not all flow in one direction. Men from the third world sometimes become homosexual prostitutes in cities of the imperialist countries. According to one estimate (which may be inflated for polemical purposes), 500 out of 700 transvestite prostitutes in Paris are Brazilians—in fact, the Association for the Defense of French Prostitutes reportedly protested to the French government about unfair (low wage) Brazilian competition. 44

**Proto-Gay Communities in the Third World**

(4) Although new forms of homosexuality continue to be imported from imperialist countries to the third world, the sexualities that third world people feel to be their own often bear little resemblance to those that existed before European conquest. Truly indigenous sexualities have been supplanted by or combined with sexualities of European origin.

If sexualities in the imperialist countries and in the third world seem different, it is not necessarily because they have different origins. Often it is because of different rhythms of development. In particular, proto-gay forms of homosexuality have persisted in many parts of the world even after they have been supplanted by modern gay/lesbian forms in their European countries of origin. This divergence is to be expected, given that all the factors that led to the rise of modern gay/lesbian communities in imperialist countries—decline of household production, industrialization, women's entry into the waged labour force, an ideology of sexuality and love, a welfare state supplanting many family functions—have come only in recent decades in several third world countries, and hardly at all in many others.

Formal independence for third world countries, paradoxically, may sometimes have widened this divergence in sexual development. For example, the British parliament's 1967 decriminalization of homosexuality among consenting male adults in private was not automatically extended to Britain's colonies, still less to former British colonies that had already become independent. Anti-gay laws on the books in parts of Africa and Asia today are thus copies of an old British law no longer applied in Britain.

Divergences between forms of homosexuality in third world and imperialist countries affects women in particular ways—in the third world "the patriarchy is more obvious than in industrialized nations"—and thus affects lesbians in particular ways. As one Indian lesbian said, "Women in India need to be independent, allowed to earn their livelihood, set up their own households; only then can they explore their sexuality." A Dutch lesbian scholar, meeting lesbians in Jakarta (Indonesia) and Lima (Peru), commented, "Their culture resembled ... the [old] butch/femme culture of the West", in which "one partner adheres more or less to the norms of male behaviour which are generally accepted in that culture", rather than the more egalitarian lesbianism now more common in the West. 45

Latin America's economic underdevelopment has helped perpetuate an extremely polarized gender system and a proto-gay pattern of homosexuality even as this pattern has begun to change in the Iberian countries it originally came from. In Brazil, for example, "there is a very easy relationship between men sexually, as long as one of them is sexually active and the other sexually passive"; the popular terms in Castilian are "activo" and "pasivo". Or in cruder words, "The macho fucks the bicha without being reduced to the bicha's status, much less being emotionally involved". In pre-revolutionary Cuba the crude words for pasivo were loca ("crazy woman") or maricón; many small Cuban villages had a loca or maricón, whose lives were very different from the homosexual tourism going on at the same time in Havana. (Lesbians in Cuba at the time were almost always closeted.) In Mexico today, one can still find men who not only see themselves as "feminine", but are attracted only to men who are simultaneously sexually involved with women. 46

**From Activos to Hechizos**

In urban Latin America particularly, pasivos often dramatize their "feminine" roles through transvestism. 47 But activo and pasivo roles, however important ideologically, are most carefully maintained in public; they are not necessarily so rigid in private. One study in Mexico concluded that between 25 and 40 percent of its subjects slipped out of the strict activo or pasivo roles that they claimed. This slippage from ideologically assigned roles, which always exists, can sometimes camouflage the fact that social development is actually weakening the roles, and that a transition from proto-gay to modern gay forms of homosexuality has already begun: another study of gay students found that three-fourths rejected activo or pasivo roles. There is even a Mexican word, hechizos, for activos who have become simply gay. This transition is also reflected in the language in Tahiti. Today less gender-defined gay Tahitian men are no longer referred to as mahu (the traditional Polynesian word) but as raeret. For the time being, at least, mahu and raeret continue to coexist in the same culture. 48

Alongside the relative strength of the family
and gender roles in the third world, there is a weakening of the family by poverty, above all in some of the poorest countries. Female-headed households are very common in Central American countries such as Costa Rica and Nicaragua. This gives somewhat more freedom to women, including sexual freedom, since many of them cannot be dependent on men even if they want to be. It may also sometimes undermine the strength of heterosexual marriage as a model. 49

Family structures, with their built-in barriers to homosexuality, generally tend to be weaker in third world cities than in the countryside. In India, for example, lively homosexual scenes reportedly exist in Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta and Bangalore—though usually without open gay bars, let alone gay political groups. 50

Particularly in third world cities that are centers for sex tourism, the influence of the sex trade can be felt even among people who are not involved in it. The stigma associated with the sex trade probably varies in intensity depending on the indigenous sexualities that preceded it, however. In Thailand, for example, where there is an indigenous and traditionally accepted role for feminine homosexual men called kathoey, sex tourism has apparently led Thais to associate kathoey more with prostitution and corruption. 51 Since kathoey seem to have traditionally been involved in more long-term, structured relationships, sex tourism seems to have brought a downgrading in status. In Latin America, where pasivos were always stigmatized, it probably does not make as much difference. In the Maghreb (Arab North Africa), where the hegemonic assumption seems to be that foreign men’s Arab sex partners are either playing the active role, just going through a youthful phase, or both, the stigma may be less.

In any event, people in third world countries do not always experience homosexual milieus in the centers of sex tourism as entirely oppressive and demeaning; these milieus can also “provide a transition for local youth between the traditional restraints of the national culture and the attractions of the West”. 52 Crackdowns on these milieus carried out without any democratic consultation of the third world people who were involved in them, as in post-revolutionary Havana or Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), can be experienced as more oppressive than exploitation in the sex trade was.

AIDS in the Third World

One of the worst manifestations of third world underdevelopment has come with the AIDS epidemic. In the words of a leading Brazilian activist, “AIDS inscribes itself upon each culture in a different way”, including from one third world country to the next. AIDS in Black Africa, where heterosexual transmission is most common, is a very different epidemic from AIDS in Brazil or Thailand, not to mention the US. But the weakness of third world health care systems and third world dependence on the US for AIDS treatments has often led to adoption in the third world of an inappropriate US model for prevention and treatment. 53

The AIDS crisis hit the third world at a time, in the 1980s, when the third world’s dependence was exacerbated by the debt crisis and the global economic crisis generally. In Mexico, for example, at the same time that AIDS cases were rising geometrically, per capita spending on health care was cut in half. Heightened economic dependence contributed to increased ideological dependence, as more third world movements and governments turned to neo-liberalism and even Reaganism-Thatcherism. As a result many third world governments mimicked official US and British responses to AIDS, preaching that family, marriage and religion were the cures. The main social response to AIDS in Mexico, coming from the Catholic hierarchy and the right-wing group Pro-Vida, was a renewed attack on gays. 54

In South Africa, where settler colonialism has persisted and been associated with a particularly reactionary brand of Christianity, AIDS is almost evenly split between a white gay male epidemic (41 percent of cases) and a black epidemic (apparently brought at first by miners from other African countries). As a result anti-gay prejudice and entrenched racism have combined to produce a government policy of malign neglect in the face of AIDS. To cite only one piece of evidence of the combined effects of racism and puritanism: South Africa today spends per capita for AIDS prevention and treatment one third of the amount spent by Botswana, which has a fraction of its wealth. 55

(5) AIDS has reinforced a tendency that already existed in third world countries: to associate homosexuality with disease, corruption and imperialism. 56 Suppression of indigenous sexualities by imperialism has helped conceal homosexuality’s authentic third world traditions; demeaning sexualities imposed or imported by imperialism have made all homosexuality seem alien; and the poverty of those exploited in urban homosexual milieus has helped to turn homosexuality into a symbol of poverty and exploitation. Some third world peoples associate homosexuality with sex-segregated institutions such as prisons, camps and migrant labour compounds that did not even exist before colonization.

European and North American movies and television have helped make third world people conscious of possibilities that before were hardly thinkable, so as to foster repression where before there was only denial. Lesbians in particular are now more likely to be persecuted in countries where a few years
ago their existence would have been denied.

Pressures to condemn homosexuality as corrupt and alien rarely come only from governments, any more than racism does. Prejudices are often deeply rooted in popular consciousness. When capitalist development weakens traditional third world family structures, homosexuality can easily be blamed, just as in imperialist countries. When there are condemnations of homosexuality in a third world culture, particularly condemnations with Christian, Islamic or other religious authority behind them, the ambiguities of a country’s real sexual past are often ignored.

Anti-Gay Bigotry Politicized

As in imperialist countries only a few decades ago, repression can be so widespread as to be virtually universal, and so effective as to make the homosexuality virtually invisible. But in many third world countries in recent decades, universal and invisible repression has given way to explicit, publicized, politicized repression. Prejudice has acquired greater force when governments or political movements have found it useful, to shift responsibility for a crisis or to mobilize the population in a controlled way. Anti-gay campaigns have been exploited by several different types of third world regimes and movements: authoritarian populists; the fascist and quasi-fascist right; religious fundamentalists; and latter-day Maoists.

Third world regimes that have claimed to be freeing their countries from foreign domination on the basis of populist programmes, which have tended to be nationalist rather than internationalist in spirit and authoritarian rather than democratic in method, have persecuted lesbians and gay men people harshly. “Moral renovation” was a theme of the Mexican regime’s anti-gay persecutions in the 1970s, when that regime had more anti-imperialist pretensions than it does today. The fact that homosexuality was not technically illegal in Mexico made little difference in a country where the police had (and have) sweeping latitude to enforce “public decency”, and the police have not usually worried much about laws in any event. 57

Anti-gay repression has been even more vicious in countries where all popular movements are being repressed, as witness the anti-gay campaigns of the Chilean junta in the 1970s and 1980s. Latin American right-wing death squads have more recently carried out “social clean-up” murders of gay people, particularly prostitutes and transvestites, in major cities of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. 58

In a global economic crisis, like the one that began in the 1970s and deepened in much of the third world in the 1980s, popular hunger for scapegoats can intensify and be seized on. In the upsurge of fundamentalist and communalist reaction and violence that has hit many countries, lesbians and gay men have often been among the victims. The fundamentalist regime in Iran, for example, despite “a homosexual tradition dating back thousands of years”, has been able to attack and execute gay people on the grounds that they are “a product of Western imperialism”. 59

The Sendero Luminoso guerilla movement in Peru has also been reported to execute gay people. Any claims to be extirpating Western corruption alien to Peru are falsified by the evidence of extraordinarily erotic pottery that has survived from at least one of the region’s pre-Inca indigenous cultures. Although anti-gay attitudes characteristic of Maoism may be cited as doctrinal justification by Sendero, attacks on gays by the Tupuc Amaru guerillas in Peru, who do not subscribe to Sendero’s particular Maoist ideology, have also been reported. The same drive to create and protect modern family structures that is at work among populists, fundamentalists and fascists may well explain Sendero’s and Tupuc Amaru’s acts.

Such anti-gay campaigns, like nationalist or anti-feminist campaigns, can help divide opposition movements between two contrary, counterproductive perspectives: turning to the “democratic West” for help, and giving “critical support” to bigotry in the name of anti-imperialism. Neither of these strategies can be expected either to free lesbians and gay men (who are rarely helped by closer association with foreign powers) or to build broad, strong national liberation movements (which are weakened by attacks against minorities at home). Lesbians and gay men in the third world are themselves providing the best antidote, through the resistance movements they have begun to build.
IV. The Rise of Gay/Lesbian Movements

Once a certain level of urban growth and market development has been reached in the third world, gay/lesbian communities can coalesce and can be the basis for resistance to anti-gay repression. Although the purely economic basis for the growth of gay/lesbian businesses and neighbourhoods (the so-called “gay ghetto”) is still weaker in most third world countries than in imperialist countries, “the market is now sufficiently developed in all but the very poorest third world countries for gay people to exist.” At least the market is sufficiently developed in capitals and some other major cities; gay/lesbian movements can be slow to spread to provincial centers, let alone the countryside. 60

The rhythms of economic advance and retreat may speed up or slow down gay/lesbian organization. For example Mexico, a semi-industrialized country, was the first third world country to have a mass gay/lesbian movement, with thousands taking part in gay pride marches. Lesbian and gay organizations such as Lambda, Oikuth and the Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria grew rapidly in the late 1970s. When the movement went into decline in 1982 and virtually fell apart by 1984, worsening economic conditions were probably a factor. Most lesbians and gay men, suffering from poverty, pervasive prejudice and increasingly AIDS, were not won to a very public, politicized (and internally divided) movement. When activists abandoned their political groups for a more low-key, social service orientation, they were in part succumbing to pressure from lesbians and gay men. 61

But even in the midst of the global crisis, gay/lesbian organization in the third world has continued to advance. In the third world as in the imperialist countries, anti-gay repression has been one of the most important factors in the rise of gay/lesbian movements. In fact, resistance to repression has probably been a relatively more important factor in the third world. 62

The pattern characteristic of the US, where gay/lesbian communities developed considerably in the late 1940s and 1950s and activism in defense of these communities developed slowly until the 1960s, has been rare in the third world. Instead, third world lesbians and gay men have often found themselves mobilizing in defense of communities whose existence is still rudimentary. Distinctive gay/lesbian communities emerge more slowly in the third world in part because lesbians and gay men are camouflaged to some extent by more widespread and public male and female bonding (such as Mexican cuatismo). Where gay ghettos do exist, they are even more likely than in imperialist countries to be middle-class preserves, since working-class lesbians and gays in the third world can rarely afford to go to discos or fancy bars. 63

In Costa Rica, for example, where the resources to create US-style gay businesses, institutions or neighbourhoods have never existed, there has been an ongoing combination of old proto-gay and modern gay/lesbian worlds. “No gay community existed” in a developed, institutionalized sense before 1986-87, when the AIDS crisis provoked threats from the ministry of health, raids on gay bars, mandatory testing of public employees, a rash of anti-gay propaganda and even murders of several gay men. The response was a wave of organizing that produced the country’s first four gay/lesbian organizations by the end of 1987, a quick retreat by the government, and the mobilization of hundreds of gays and lesbians by early 1988. “The repression that AIDS provoked in Costa Rica became the main stimulus for gay organization in the country”. 64

The rise of gay/lesbian resistance is even faster and stronger when it converges with broader popular resistance to the kinds of repression and dictatorship characteristic of much of the third world. It is probably no coincidence that a mass third world gay/lesbian movement arose first in Mexico, where the international student demonstrations of 1968 were echoed by strong protests against the regime. The first gay activism and consciousness-raising followed not long after, by 1971. In the late 1970s Mexican gay/lesbian activism was closely associated with anti-imperialist movements, particularly in solidarity with El Salvador and (more problematically) in solidarity with Cuba. By 1982 the gay/lesbian movement linked up with the Marxist Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), which ran several lesbian and gay leaders as candidates in the elections that year. 65

The growth of feminism in the 1970s was also crucial for the foundation of the first Mexican lesbian group in 1977. 66 In India the rise of public lesbianism after the 1987 marriage of two policewomen both drew on the rise of Indian feminism and provoked discussions in feminist groups such as the Forum Against Women’s Oppression in Bombay. Feminists faced with the issue of lesbianism, in the third world as in imperialist countries, are likely at first to fear the stigma that can come with public support for lesbians’ rights (as if feminists did not face enough prejudice already). But in the third world as elsewhere, feminists usually come to understand that lesbians’
struggles are an important part of their own.

In Brazil, the rise of a strong popular movement against the dictatorship in the late 1970s brought in its wake the first Brazilian Congress of Organized Homosexual Groups in 1980. The new Workers Party (PT) linked up with the new gay/lesbian movement. PT representatives were elected with open gay/lesbian backing and explicitly pro-gay programmes. In one city the PT municipal directorate and a local gay/lesbian group shared an office. 67

The left's prejudices have often limited this kind of convergence with gay/lesbian resistance, however, especially in periods when Stalinism and/or Maoism have been strong. In Argentina in 1973, for example, when right-wing posters linked the ERP (then the Argentinian section of the Fourth International) to homosexuality and drug addiction, the left responded by chanting, “No somos putas, no somos faloperos” (“We’re not faggots, we’re not junkies”). One can imagine how a gay or lesbian participant must have felt hearing this chant. 68

International Solidarity

Examples such as Costa Rica and Brazil make clear that gay/lesbian liberation in the third world is not an “export product of the imperialist countries”. But it is sometimes difficult to distinguish autonomous development of gay/lesbian communities from strong influences from gay/lesbian communities of imperialist countries.

For centuries the direct influence of imperialist countries on third world sexuality took the forms almost exclusively of repression and domination. These pernicious kinds of imperialist influence still continue today. But the rise of working class and popular movements have made another kind of influence possible as well: solidarity between movements in the imperialist countries and movements in the third world. This solidarity “piggybacked” in an odd way on the strong cultural influence that imperialist cultures have on third world cultures. Since 1969, developments in European or North American gay/lesbian movements have often had an extraordinarily fast (if more or less diluted) influence on third world gay/lesbian movements. 69

Solidarity expressed through the international feminist movement has been significant for the development of third world lesbian movements: for example, when lesbians from North America organized on workshop on lesbianism at the UN Women’s Decade Conference in Nairobi in 1985. Several times in this packed workshop a Kenyan woman got up to say, “In our country it does not exist”—and other Kenyan women would shout, “Yes it does! Yes it does!” Kenyan lesbians thus gained an opportunity to claim a visibility they had not had before. Two Indian lesbians in Bombay have said that at a time when their Indian feminist friends were “very hostile” to their relationship, they were sustained by supportive Western lesbians who managed to find them. 70

Latin America is particularly open to pro-gay/lesbian European and North American influence, given its general openness to European and North American culture. This openness is suggested sometimes by the words used. In decades past, men who would engage in homosexual relationships without sticking to one sexual or gender role were referred to as “moderno” (in Peru) or “internacional” (in Mesoamerica, especially Mexico City). The words implied some kind of intuitive understanding that the role-boundedness of Latin American proto-gay homosexuality was pre-modern as opposed to modern, narrowly regional as opposed to international. In the 1970s and 1980s “moderno” gave way to “gay”, borrowed directly from the North American movement. But while “gay” sometimes implied a transition to less role-bound sexuality, sometimes the word has changed but not the reality. In one last interesting twist, in Mexico, where lesbians and gay men have been changing their patterns and have been particularly susceptible to US influence, many nonetheless resist admitting the word “gay” into Spanish: they see it as cultural imperialism. 71

One way in which gay/lesbian movements in imperialist countries influence gay/lesbian movements in the third world is through migration of third world people to imperialist countries: either because third world people eventually return to their countries of origin with new ideas and experiences, or because they stay in contact with friends back home. An emerging gay/lesbian identity can even be a motive for migration, as with one Mexican man who moved with a European lover to New York: he “felt he could live there freely as a gay person”. Latin American countries like Costa Rica have experience large-scale gay exoduses lasting for decades, which have included people who later returned as leaders of gay/lesbian liberation. 72

The importance of migration to and from imperialist countries for gay/lesbian movements can also be seen in South Asia. The first two gay/lesbian South Asian organizations, Trikone and Anamika, were actually founded in 1985-86 in the North American diaspora. Within a year or two the first gay/lesbian groups formed in South Asia itself: one, in Patna, Bihar, as a Trikone chapter; others, in Delhi, Bombay and elsewhere, as independent organizations. 73 Obstacles to migration by third world people can be seen in this light as obstacles to international gay/lesbian solidarity as well. For example, US immigration restrictions and Mexico’s anti-gay policies inhibit US solidarity with Mexican gays and
US solidarity with movements against AIDS in Mexico.

**Gay Liberation and Revolution: Soviet Russia**

International solidarity was apparent from the first decades of the modern gay/lesbian movement, in particular from one of the first countries in which a gay/lesbian movement developed—Germany—to one of the closest and most strongly influenced poorer countries: Russia. Russian socialists followed the lead given by German Social Democrats, who had responded quickly and positively to the first stirrings of the gay movement. German socialists responded to the trial of Oscar Wilde with a defense of Wilde by Eduard Bernstein in their theoretical journal *Die Neue Zeit*, and responded to the founding in 1897 of the pro-gay Scientific-Humanitarian Committee with a call in the German Reichstag in 1898 by party leader August Bebel for repeal of Germany’s anti-gay Paragraph 175.  

Russian intellectuals and leftists responded eagerly and quickly at the turn of the century to trends in Western and Central Europe, much as Latin Americans respond to European and North American trends today. The direction that German socialists set was followed by the Russian Bolsheviks after they took power in 1917. But given that Soviet Russia had hardly any urban gay/lesbian communities, hardly any material basis for gay/lesbian communities, and no gay/lesbian movement whatsoever, the new regime’s policies were hesitant and in some respects contradictory.

Homosexuality was completely decriminalized in the new Soviet criminal code in 1922, and treated no differently than heterosexuality in the clauses dealing with minors or assault. As the director of the Moscow Institute of Social Hygiene wrote in his *Sexual Revolution in Russia* in 1923, Soviet law treated homosexuality “exactly the same as so-called ‘natural’ intercourse”. Literary works with lesbian and gay themes were published throughout the 1920s, including works with powerful and explicit homoeroticism that would have been banned in any other country. Soviet delegations attended the first four congresses of the World League for Sexual Reform, in which the German Scientific-Humanitarian Committee also played an important role, in 1921, 1928, 1929 and 1930. At its height the League claimed over 130,000 affiliated members.  

Yet at the same time Soviet health authorities often treated homosexuality as a disease that could be cured. A 1923 work on *Sexual Life of Contemporary Youth* called homosexuality a “sickness” and “perverted”. Even the prominent Soviet diplomat Georgii Chicherin was sent to Germany for “treatment” of his homosexuality in 1925.  

**Gay Liberation and Revolution: Nicaragua**

There is a much more recent example of linkage between gay/lesbian solidarity and anti-imperialist revolution: Nicaragua. Pre-revolutionary Nicaragua was typical of Latin American patterns of homosexuality in many ways. On the one hand, there was a proto-gay, very much gender role-based tradition of *locas*, expressed for example in the traditional annual parade of men in drag in the center of national folklore, Masaya. On the other hand, US sex tourism (on a very small scale) and homosexual prostitution existed in a few Managua bars. Suspicion toward old-fashioned-seeming homosexuality in the Nicaraguan countryside and toward sometimes exploitative homosexuality in Managua bars pushed the FSLN toward anti-gay attitudes, which were particularly in evidence during the Sandinista government’s first years. There was pressure while the FSLN was in office to avoid public discussion of homosexuality or public self-identification by lesbian and gay FSLN militants. A gay/lesbian “group of reflection and action”, including FSLN members and others doing military service, was broken up by the interior ministry in 1985. But solidarity by US progressives with the Nicaraguan revolution was clearly crucial to its survival, a fact that gave US anti-imperialists a significant influence on the FSLN. Many anti-imperialist lesbians and gays in the US managed to combine unconditional support for the revolution with uncompromising insistence on their own visibility as gay/lesbian anti-imperialists, for example by sending gay/lesbian work brigades to Nicaragua. Combined with the efforts of lesbian and gay Nicaraguan leftists, who took courage from the end of Somozista repression, the Sandinista conflict with the Catholic hierarchy, and the new regime’s efforts to encourage women’s equality and independence, US gay/lesbian solidarity had an impact. The simultaneous rise of a sophisticated, militant movement against AIDS in the US and appearance of AIDS in Nicaragua created an opening for cooperation between the Sandinista government and the fledgling gay/lesbian movement. In 1988 lesbians and gay men organized an AIDS collective with support from the ministry of health.

Gay/lesbian activism continued even after the rise to power of the US-backed, sexually traditionalist Chamorro government in 1990. The Sandinistas’ fall from power even created somewhat more freedom to debate differences inside the FSLN and question the imperatives of “national unity”. In June 1991 300 men and women came to the country’s first public gay/lesbian pride celebration, though it was attacked both by Radio Católica and by the Sandinista Radio Ya. In León and Managua, departmental FSLN congresses passed resolutions that “no member of the FSLN shall be discriminated against for his or her sexual orientation”. While the new gay/lesbian movement’s fate is tied to the uncertain future of the Nicaraguan revolution, it has given an important new
example of linkage between gay/lesbian liberation and anti-imperialist revolution.

Another important contemporary example comes from South Africa, where (as noted above) the repressive attitudes of traditional white Calvinism have apparently coexisted with a greater degree of tolerance among the African majority. The issue came to the attention of the liberation movement there when one of several African National Congress members on trial for their lives, Simon Nkoli, turned out to be gay. This provoked a split in the South African gay/lesbian movement when the multi-racial gay/lesbian group that Nkoli had belonged to failed to support him and take a clear stand against the regime. Militant, anti-apartheid, gay/lesbian groups such as the Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand and the Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action were founded. Nkoli's open gayness also gave an opportunity for gay/lesbian progressives in imperialist countries to express their solidarity with the South African liberation struggle. These events probably contributed to the ANC's decision in 1991 to come out in support of a gay/lesbian rights law. 79
V. Sexuality under Bureaucratized Revolutions

Few third world revolutions have provided such relatively positive examples for gay/lesbian liberation as Russia in the 1920s or Nicaragua since the mid-1980s, unfortunately. The potential for sexual liberation opened up by revolutions has usually remained merely potential, or been closed down by repression. The potential for transitions toward a socialism of democracy and abundance inherent in these revolutions has also never yet been fully realized. They have instead become vehicles for transitions in other directions: toward bureaucratized forms of non-capitalist economies, or even, in countries where the process has now come full circle, toward the restoration of capitalism. Transitional regimes have too rarely promoted values of internationalism, pluralism and economic democracy.

Anti-imperialist movements in the third world have often turned out to be instruments of bureaucratic "modernization". The consequences for the development of sexuality have turned out to be similar in many ways to the consequences of more purely capitalist projects in the third world: puritanism and repression.

Stalinism in the Soviet Union undid whatever was positive in the Russian Revolution’s record on homosexuality. An article in the 1929 Great Medical Encyclopedia, reprinted in abridged form in 1930 in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, while still calling for repeal of laws against homosexuality, asserted its "wrongness". The fifth congress of the World League for Sexual Reform, originally meant to take place in Moscow in 1931 on the theme of "Marxism and the Question of Sex", was cancelled by the Soviet government and had to be moved to Prague. A new penal law against homosexuality was announced in December 1933, and made compulsory throughout the USSR in March 1934. There were mass arrests of gay men in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere in January 1934. Although some of Stalin’s repressive laws (such as his ban on abortion) were repealed or softened after his death, the ban on homosexuality remained in effect and gay people were persecuted throughout the rest of the Soviet Union’s existence.

The Chinese revolution brought a regime to power in 1949 that has proven unremittingly anti-lesbian and anti-gay. While sexual "license" in the pre-revolutionary imperialist enclave of Shanghai may have influenced the leadership’s attitude, a puritan ethic linked to the regime’s drive for industrialization may well have been more important. The Chinese government implicitly acknowledged that its repression of homosexuality was directed against pre-capitalist Chinese traditions rather than "Western corruption" when it condemned female "sisterhoods" in Guangzhou as "feudal remnants". Yet despite a rich homosexual history in China (see above), the Chinese government today classifies homosexuality as one of the "Western social diseases".

The Cuban revolution, given its importance for revolutionaries all over Latin America, has played a particularly negative role in associating the left with persecution of lesbians and gays. US imperialism played a role here, not only through the pre-revolutionary sex tourism that reinforced anti-gay prejudice among Cuban anti-imperialists, but through backing a counter-revolutionary fifth column in Cuba in the early 1960s, which ensured that "private space was invaded as never before". The Soviet Union and Stalinist Popular Socialist Party also helped to fuel anti-gay prejudice. After a certain point, however, the Castro regime’s attacks on gays provided their own justification: even gay people who had backed the revolution found themselves pushed toward ties with the anti-Castro underground because it was one of the few places to escape the repression and isolation.

The height of the regime’s persecution came when gays were rounded up into the UMAP camps in 1965. Though the camps were closed in 1967, other anti-gay measures followed in the 1970s: lesbians and gay men were purged from teaching, from delegations abroad, from the foreign ministry, from the medical profession. CP membership remains officially impossible for lesbians and gay men. Although a saying among Cuban lesbians and gay men today is reputedly, "Se dice nada, se hace todo" ("Say nothing, do everything"), the regime’s new AIDS policy in the late 1980s of quarantining everyone who tests positive for the HIV virus (a policy that may prove wrong-headed from a public health standpoint) has had a chilling effect.
VI. Toward Gay/Lesbian Liberation in the Third World

What possibility is there for masses of people in the third world to experience homosexuality freely, outside the constraints of both anti-gay repression and modern sexual exploitation? Lesbians and gay men can experience a considerable degree of freedom in the richest imperialist countries such as the Netherlands, despite the sexual fetishism and the constraints of gender and kinship that still exist there. But this kind of freedom depends on a level of economic development that is beyond the reach of third world countries, at least in the current time of global economic crisis. For lesbians and gay men in the third world, socialism probably represents the only hope for liberation.

So far, although the experiences of early revolutionary Russia and Sandinista Nicaragua suggest that the gay/lesbian movement can be linked to anti-capitalist revolutions, no revolution has fully embraced gay/lesbian liberation. But given the rapid growth of gay/lesbian movements in the third world in the past decade, if new revolutions do occur in the third world, the prospect of their linking up with gay/lesbian liberation movements seems not only possible but probable. Gay/lesbian liberation in the third world may become an integral component of a new process of permanent revolution, which enables struggles for democratic rights to grow over into a struggle for social transformation and national struggles to grow over into an international struggle.

In general, the pace by which democratic struggles grow over into revolutionary struggles varies. Since the gay/lesbian sexualities and communities in the third world also vary, the specific tasks of gay/lesbian liberation in each third world country will certainly vary. Even the socialist society achieved as the end result of this process, and the forms of sexual life within it, are unlikely to be uniform from one region to the next. The forms of the transformed society will probably vary because of the varying cultures and circumstances in which it will arise and the varying processes through which it will be achieved.

But the basic prerequisites of socialism, as classically understood in the Marxist tradition, do suggest some guidelines for a transformed sexuality. Socialism is envisioned as a society in which the commodityfication of human relationships and state coercion will ultimately disappear; in which individuals will become able to develop fully and freely. Forms of sexuality that have existed in the past have been very much bound up with state and social coercion and, particularly under capitalism, with commodification of human relationships. Any socialist society that develops as foreseen in Marxism, therefore, will be characterized by neither pre-capitalist forms of sexuality, with their rigid gender and kinship systems; nor capitalist sexuality with its fetishesized categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality; nor the repressive forms characteristic of bureaucratic states.

Elements of an Agenda

For now those who want to see this social and sexual liberation must act as “tribes of the oppressed”: seek out, learn about, learn from and actively support struggles that arise in their countries, including struggles for sexual freedom. The vision of full gay/lesbian liberation in each country will be developed out of the autonomous movement of that country, out of its own problems and experiences. It will also result from debates and convergences among different ideological currents—socialist, feminist, nationalist, ecologist—that will have to work together to create broad, strong movements. But because certain problems are likely to recur in many countries, elements of a programme for gay/lesbian liberation that are likely to be appropriate in many third world countries can be tentatively suggested:

- Support for each culture’s autonomous though not isolated development, including autonomous development of homosexual expression within it; building of links among gay/lesbian and other liberation movements in the third world, particularly at the regional level (Latin America, Black Africa, the Arab world, South Asia, Southeast Asia), with support from movements in the imperialist countries; freedom of movement between third world and imperialist countries;

- As steps toward the liberation of women in general and lesbians in particular: women’s right to work, equal pay, and economic independence; women’s right to marry according to their free choice, or not to marry at all, and to divorce freely; women’s right to be in public, dressed as they choose, without harassment; an end to clitoridectomy; an end to widow-burning;

- An end to fundamentalist and communilist violence and persecution, through movements uniting and fully including all those who suffer from violence and persecution;
• Massive funding for AIDS prevention, education and treatment in the third world, supplied from the imperialist countries, through programmes designed and controlled by third world people and particularly people with AIDS/HIV, in ways appropriate to the conditions in particular countries; unity between lesbians and gay men and others needing social services in the fight to cancel the third world debt;

• An end to repression or harassment of prostitutes, male or female, and social rights and benefits for prostitutes, to be funded by taxes on tourists and the rich; international joint work on sex tourism by women and gays in third world and imperialist countries; alleviation of pressures pushing people toward prostitution by giving people, particularly young people, the means to live and survive as they choose, including outside of existing family structures;

• An end to police harassment, violence and extortion directed against prostitutes or anyone else; self-organization of women and gays for self-defense; an end to repression and to any form of discrimination based on people’s sexuality or gender role;

• Transformation/transcendence of family structures through recognition and legitimation of existing diversity; greater freedom to change family structures or leave them; social provision of as many family functions as possible (childcare etc.) through structures that are democratic and decentralized but not family-based; and

• Encouragement of self-organization and self-determination of oppressed people as part of the solution to any problem.

Many of these ideas obviously depend on having enough money to provide social services. There are limits to the extent that they could be realized with the resources of third world countries alone, without aid from governments in the richest countries. On the other hand, as the example of Nicaragua has already shown, even embarking on such a programme could greatly strengthen solidarity efforts by lesbians and gay men in imperialist countries.

It is even possible to imagine that the relationship between gay/lesbian movements in imperialist and third world countries could be reversed, with third world movements becoming the teachers and patrons. Third world gay/lesbian movements, largely bypassing the fetishism and ghettoization characteristic of European and North American gay/lesbian communities, might give new force and concreteness to visions of what true sexual liberation could be.

Meanwhile, focusing on possibilities that are realistic in the short term, there is a need to fight in the left in the third world against the kinds of oppression and prejudice that exist in third world societies. Lesbian and gay radicals will be hindered from playing a leadership role in gay/lesbian movements, or from belonging to left organizations, if they face discrimination or disparagement in the left’s own ranks. They will be empowered in efforts for gay/lesbian liberation if their efforts are understood, appreciated and supported by other radicals. In the words of one third world revolutionary organization, the left needs to “live in everyday alertness” so as to resist “the influence of the oppressive ideas, attitudes and practices of the surrounding society”. 85

The risks of being out in front of the rest of the left and of being associated with this particular issue are real, particularly in countries where gay/lesbian movements exist barely if at all and prejudice is pervasive. But in the long run the risks are far greater of being left behind as gay/lesbian movements develop and move forward in the third world, as they are doing and will do.
1 In June 1999 in New York City, a police raid on a gay bar called The Stonewall resulted for the first time in open resistance by its victims, with several nights of fighting in the streets of New York between gays and police. This event became known as the Stonewall Rebellion. In the following months Gay Liberation Fronts were founded in many cities in the US and Europe.

2 Thanks to Arthur Bula, Anne Finger, Salati Jaber, Vibhuti Patel, Tom Patterson and the students of the 1993 IKE Third World School for encouragement, help in finding sources, and suggestions during this process—and thanks in advance to readers of this working paper for sending comments quickly and copiously.

3 One current on the left that has made an effect to learn from gay/lesbian movements is the Fourth International, of which this essay's author is a supporter. Its 1979 World Congress recognized that "extreme backwardness regarding sexuality" in the third world has led to "the harsh oppression of homosexuals, both male and female", and called for "abolition of all antihomosexual laws" and "an end to all discrimination against homosexuals" ("Resolution on women’s liberation", in 1979 World Congress of the Fourth International: Major Resolutions and Reports, New York: Intercontinental Press, Jan. 1990, 89, 96). More recently, its 1991 World Congress said, "The dynamic of lesbian and gay liberation struggles... is a challenge to the patriarchal family and the imposed sexual division of labour that are pillars of women’s oppression and a major determinant of social control in both the advanced and dependent capitalist countries." The 1991 Congress also said, "The development of the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation in all three sectors of the world revolution is of critical importance for the struggle for socialism" (Minutes of the Thirteenth World Congress of the Fourth International (2803983), 5-6-12; [reference in final published Manifesto]). This essay aims to carry on in the spirit of these resolutions.

4 The countries of Europe, North America, Japan and Australia are referred to in this study as "industrialized" rather than "developed", "advanced" or "industrialized". This terminology rests on a analysis, which is that there is not enough space here to develop, that the "backwardness" of the third world is not simply proof that they are moving more slowly along the same road of "development", but a continually renewed result of the same economic system that makes the "advanced" capitalist countries "advanced". For a critical appreciation of "queer nationalism" and "queer theory", see Peter Drucker, "Gay liberation's second wave: what is queer nationalism?" Against the Current no. 43 (Mar.-Apr. 1993).

5 Saskia Wieringa, "An anthropological critique of constructionism: benches and butch", in Dennis Altman eda., Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality, London: GMP, 1989, 220. Dennis Altman goes so far as to say, "In fact when we speak of homosexuals we are using a concept that exists to have much meaning outside the affluent developed countries of the First World" (Altman, The Homosexualization of America, The Americanization of the Homosexual, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982, 50).


7 This study thus dissent from Dennis Altman's conclusion that even where "a strong homosexual tradition precedes the Western impact", it is "westernization" that "introduces... the idea of a homosexual identity" (Altman, The Homosexualization of America, 51).


12 Ford and Beach's survey found "bereaved" forms of homosexuality the most common pattern among the seventy-six societies they studied, with examples on every continent (Ford and Beach, Patterns of Sexual Behaviour, cited in Fensbach, The Spiral Path, 72).


15 "Hili", Encyclopedia of Homosexuality [neglect exact reference].


17 Ford and Beach found age-defined male homosexuality in thirteen of the seventy-six societies they studied (Ford and Beach, Patterns of Sexual Behaviour, cited in Fensbach, The Spiral Path, 72, John S. Townsend (in his Perverts in Paradise, Martin Foreman trans., London: GMP, 1986, 62) reports that despite consensus among anthropologists that such forms of homosexuality exist among many Amazonian peoples, while Brazilians are still accused of "importing" it to them.

Note: "Not all behavior conforms with any ideal norm, and not everyone in societies with age-defined structures of homosexuality "graduates" from the homosexual "phase". Examples of reciprocal homosexuality can be found alongside the dominant age-defined patterns in Melanesia, ancient Greece, the Islamic world and Japan (Stephen O. Murray, Social Theory, Homosexual Realities, Gal Saber monograph no. 3, New York: Gay Academic Union, 1984, 48; Paul Gordon Schalow, "Male love in early modern Japan: a literary depiction of the "youth"," in Martin Duberman et al., Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, New York: New American Library, 1990, 119 ("The roles assumed in man-youth relations sometimes superseded literal definitions of 'man' and 'youth'"))

18 Malek Chebel, L'Esprit de Séraf: Perversions et marginalités sexuelles au Maghreb, Paris: Lieu Commun, 1988, 25, 27, 22, 40; John Boswell, "Revolutions, universals, and sexual categories", in Duberman, Hidden from History, 27. Rin Wooknur cites Jeanette Wald of the University of Colorado as saying that the Koran does not condemn homosexuality (Wookner, "Homosexuality in the Arab and Muslim world", in Likosky, Coming Out, 104), but to that the Koran quotes Lari, known as a Jewish prophet and patriarch of Muslims, as saying, "Are you blind that you should commit indecency, lustfully seeking men instead of women?" and, "Will you fornicate with males and leave your wives, whom Allah has created for you? Surely you are great transgressors". (The Koran, N.J. Dawood trans., Baltimore: Penguin, 1968, 84 (23:50), 203 (66:16-50)).

19 ABVA, Less than Gay, excerpted in Ratti, A Lotus of Another Color, 31-32.

20 Vivien M. Ng, "Homosexuality and the state in late imperial China", in Duberman, Hidden from History, 76-77; Fang-fu Tsan and Yang-nee Tsai, "Male homosexuality in contemporary mainland China" (1988), in Likoksy, Coming Out, 39. In pre-capitalist Japan anatahka (sex between adult men and male youths) was never outlawed, although it was supposed to take place only in very specific, hierarchical social contexts and might be between friends and young kabuki actors, and between samurai and other youths. Adult men who were exclusively heterosexual, like those who were exclusively homosexual, were considered "mildly eccentric" (Schalow, "Male love in early modern Japan", in Duberman, Hidden from History, 119-22).

It is interesting to note that many scholars see the first protochronal poetry of "courtly love," which strongly emphasized idyllic (heterosexual) love outside of marriage, as influenced by earlier Arab, Persian poetry, which generally portrayed the illicit love as homosexual (see above).


Ellen Ross and Rayna Rapp, "Sex and society: a research note from social history ad anthropologii" (1981), in Sisow, Powers of Desire, 65. Stephen O. Murray in Social Theory, Homosexual Reality sees this transition as a general European shift from an age-based to a gender-based form of homosexuality; but it is important to see that the new "proto-gay" homosexuality was as remote from gender-based "berdache" homosexuality of pre-state societies as it was from the age-based homosexuality of the ancient Mediterranean world. Significantly, the word "gay" was a slang word for prostitute in English before it was strongly associated with homosexuality.


Gough and McNair, Gay Liberation in the Eighties, 50.

"Capitalism drives people into heterosexual families" but "weakens the bonds that once kept families together so that their members experience a growing instability in the place they have come to expect happiness and emotional security" (D’Emilio, "Capitalism and gay identity," in Sisow, Powers of Desire, 109).

Likovsky, Coming Out, 3.


Fernbach, The Spiral Path, 17-18, 22; D’Emilio, "Capitalism and gay identity," in Sisow, Powers of Desire, 110-11. According to a third world gay liberationist, a common word for gay in northeast Brazil is "doublous"; and "gay men are exactly that: doubtful... those who confirm uncertainty, who open a space for difference and who constitute a symbol of contradiction confronting the bounds of normality" (Treviran, Perverts in Paradise, 5). Fernbach goes on, however, to warn that "our homosexuality, unlike the prevalent forms of homosexuality met with in other societies, or even some marginal forms found in our own, is incompatible with the gender definitions of femininity and masculinity" (Fernbach, The Spiral Path, 18).

This is analogous to saying that working class self-organization is incompatible with the capitalist system; it ascribes a constant level of revolutionary consciousness and practice to oppressed people, whose resistance in reality usually stops short of a revolutionary challenge to their oppression. Gough and McNair’s more careful formulation seems preferable: "Gay sexual activity will not overthrow the family system. But the family’s obsolescence means that it can be superseded, and the growth of open gay sexuality is an advertisement that this is so." (Gough McNair, Gay Liberation in the Eighties, 50)


Treviran, Perverts in Paradise, 55.

Makeda Silvera, "Man royals and sodomites: some thoughts on the invisibility of Afro-Caribbean lesbians," in Likovsky, Coming Out, 51-78.


Further research should be done on why Jamaica, despite sharing with Brazil, Cuba and Haiti the fact of being a European colony populated largely by African slaves, developed significantly different sexual and homosexual patterns. Questions that might help explain this divergence might include: whether Jamaican slaves came from different African regions with different cultures (perhaps reflected in differences between voodoo, condamble and Sanderia on the one hand and Rastafarism on the other); or whether distinctive British influences (such as the relatively late, seventeenth-century development of English proto-gay communities) made a difference. One likely factor is differences in economic development. Brazil and Cuba remained countries largely of plantation agriculture even after the (very late) abolition of slavery there; and Haiti after its revolution had for a long time a largely subsistence economy. In Jamaica, in contrast, slaves acquired their own private farm plots even before emancipation; British racial prejudice and relatively sparse slave settlement limited the development of a mulatto petty bourgeoisie; and integration in the British empire allowed the development after emancipation of a (poor) independent Afro-Caribbean peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. These circumstances may have favoured Jamaican adoption of a "Protestant" rejection of homosexuality.

39 Chezel, L’Esprit de Sérail, 21 (citè as Joël Bouquet, L’Hétique sexuelle de l’aventure), 42.


Rex Wookner, "Homosexuality in the Arab and Modern west," Coming Out, 112.

Treviran, Perverts in Paradise, 22, 23.

Altman, The Homosexualization of America, 51; Gough and McNair, Gay Liberation in the Eighties, 87; Lumsden, Homosexuality, Society and the State, 40-41; Ratt, "A question of color," in A Lotos of Another Color, 99.

Allen Young, Gays under the Cuban Revolution, San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1981, 3; Treviran, Perverts in Paradise, 166.

Treviran, Perverts in Paradise, 165.

Jacobo Schiffer Sikora, La Formación de una Contracultura: Homosexualidad y Sida en Costa Rica, San Jose: Editorial Cuacacian, 1989, 59; Islam, "Breaking silence," in Ratt, A Lotos of Another Color, 217; Wieringa, "An anthropological critique," in Altman, Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality, 215, 217. Wieringa argues that these commonalities in forms of homosexuality that arise in different regions, cultures and historical periods can only be explained by a human psychological tendency toward dominant and submissive roles in homosexual relationships. She does not acknowledge that all the cultures she mentions are characterized by gender roles and social domination over women, or say whether she considers male supremacy to be another innate, "psychobiological" tendency in humans.

Jared Braiterman, "Fighting AIDS in Brazil" (1990), in Likovsky, Coming Out, 299; Treviran, Perverts in Paradise, 56; José Téllez, In the flat of the Revolution, cited in Young, Gays under the Cuban Revolution, 6; Arguelles and Rich, "Homosexuality, homophobia and revolution", in Duberman, Hidden from History, 444; Joseph M. Carrier, "Gay liberation and coming out in Mexico," in Likovsky, Coming Out, 495. Dennis Altman claims "a particular combination of Catholic teachings, political repression, and especially the Peruvian mauro tradition" for holding back "the development of the gay subculture and the growth of a sense of homosexual identity" in Latin America; but note that the same combination of Catholicism, repression and machismo failed to prevent a flowering of the gay/lesbian community in the Spanish state after the economic growth of the 1960s and political opening of the 1970s (Altman, The Homosexualization of America, 50).

Transvesticism is wearing clothes that are considered appropriate for the other gender. In imperialist countries in the past few decades, wearing male clothes by women has become so common that people considered to be transvestites are almost always male. Male transvestites in the US are popularly called "drag queens".

Joseph M. Carrier, Urban Mexican Male Homosexual Encounters, Ph.D. dissertation, Irvine: Univ. of California, 1975, 120-21 (transvestite proclivities"
often say that some of their most moody clients turn out in private to prefer a sexually submissive role (Trevisán, *Perverts in Paradise*, 160); Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 45-46; Robert I. Levy, *The Tabhúaens, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973. 140, cited in Murray, *Social Theory, Homosexual Realities*, 50. Dennis Altman comments, "‘Drag queens’ are most prevalent in those societies that combine rigid concepts of sex roles with sufficient freedom to allow at least this particular form of rebellion" (Altman, *The Homosexualization of America*, 59).

49 About 50 percent of households in Costa Rica are female-headed, and those are more gay bars in its capital, San José, than in much bigger Mexico City or even Caracas (Sikora, *La Formación de una Contraestructura*, 59). On the other hand, at least 40 percent of Mexican households are also female-headed (Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 50), and these are similar figures for other third world countries. Perhaps some other difference between San José and Mexico City accounts for the difference in number of bars.

50 Kim, "They aren't that primitive", in Rati, *A Lotus of Another Color*, 92


52 Altman, *The Homosexualization of America*, 51

53 Herbert Daniel, "Above all, life", Elizabeth Station trans. (excerpted from*Vida antes de la muerte = Life before Death*, Rio de Janeiro: Iaciririo e Tipografia Aboli, 1989), in Likosky, *Coming Out*, 390; Jared Braierman, "Fighting AIDS in Brazil" (1990), in Likosky, *Coming Out*, 302. Herbert Daniel comments, "The African model" (where transmission is basically heterosexual) serves as a counterpart rather than a starting point for understanding the global problem of this pandemic" (Daniel, "Above all, life", in Likosky, *Coming Out*, 389). At the 1992 Rekthing Marxism conference in the US, AIDS writer Cindy Patton noted that whereas the spread of AIDS is usually dealt with in North America and Europe as "epidemiology" (the spread of a disease through a population), in the third world the model of AIDS is often derived from "AIDS medicine" (the study of specifically third world diseases that are supposed to be endemic and limited to third world peoples).

54 Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 36-49, 51


56 In imperialist countries, ironically, AIDS has contributed to the stigmatization of third world people, particularly Africans and Haitians.

57 Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 53. It would be interesting to research parallels in Argentina under Peronism, in India under the Congress regime, in Egypt under Nasser, etc.


59 Altman, *The Homosexualization of America*, 51


61 Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 64-66

62 Interestingly, the gay liberation movement in Guadalajara survived the early 1980s somewhat better than the more theoretically developed movement in Mexico City, probably due to a unifying, mobilizing and at least temporarily successful campaign against fierce police harassment (Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 80). The Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT), which took part in the Guadalajara campaign despite the campaign's programmatic statement, drew the conclusion that the gay liberation movement could only consolidate itself through "tangible gains to the field of the specific problems that affect the gay community, whose solution would strengthen social and political self-confidence in the gay milieu" (Mxj Mejía, "Introducción", in *Liberación Homosexual*, 5).

63 Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 32, 38; PRT, "Resolución", in *Liberación Homosexual*, 19

64 Sikora, *La Formación de una Contraestructura*, 72, 75, 106, 109, 112-13, 279, 267, 284, 119

65 PRT, "Resolución", in *Liberación Homosexual*, 22; Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 63-64; Yan Maria Castro, "For a free and conscious sexuality", *International Viewpoint* no. 245 (May 1993), 27-28

66 Castro, "For a free and conscious sexuality", *International Viewpoint* no. 245, 27

67 Trevián, *Perverts in Paradise*, 145, 152, 149

68 "Shrouded in silence" (1982), in Likosky, *Coming Out*, 75

69 Gough and McNair, *Gay Liberation in the Eighties*, 87; To cite only two examples from Brazil: within a few years of Oscar Wílde's trial in London, the Brazilian writer João do Rio was being called the "tropical Oscar Wilde". Within a few years of the appearance in San Francisco in the 1970s of a satirical, political drag troupe called "the Cockettes", there was a similar group in Brazil called "Dei Croquetes" (Trevián, *Perverts in Paradise*, 106).


72 Carrier, "Gay liberation and coming out in Mexico", *Coming Out*, 493. Theorists and leaders of gay liberation who have spent time in the US include Juan Jacobo Hernández of Mexico (Lumadén, *Homosexualidad, Society and the State*, 60), Jacobo Schiffer Sikora of Costa Rica (Sikora, *La Formación de una Contraestructura*, 70-71, 15) and João Trevián of Brazil. The group Trevián helped found, Semos, used US consciousness-raising groups as a model (Trevián, *Perverts in Paradise*, 134, 137).

73 Rati, "Introduction", in *A Lotus of Another Color*, 12; Islam, *Breaking silence", in *A Lotus of Another Color*, 218; "Directory of resources for South Asian lesbians and gays", in *A Lotus of Another Color*, 202-03

74 John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement* (1864-1935). New York: Times Change Press, 1974, 58-59, 13. German Social Democrats' pro-gay stance was all the more remarkable in that Marx and Engels' legacy on homosexuality had been negative, particularly compared to earlier "unipan socialists" such as Charles Fourier and Robert Owen or later anarchists such as Emma Goldman. Engels, for example, referred to the "disastrous practice of boy-love" among the ancient Greeks and the "gross, unnatural vice" of early Germans (Friedrich Engels, * Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976, 128, 133). On the other hand, the logic of Marx and Engels' works provided a reasonably sound (if not wholly adequate) basis for challenging such institutions as the bourgeoisie family and the sexual division of labour. Bebel and his generation of Marxists took this theoretical legacy, rather than the anti-gay prejudices that Marx and Engels hardly bothered to justify theoretically, as their starting point.

75 Lauritsen, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement*, 63-64, 38; Simon Karlinsky, "Russia's gay literature and culture: the impact of the October Revolution", in Duberman, *Hidden from History*, 357-59. Trotsky discussed one strikingly homophobic poem, Nikolai Kliever's "The Fourth Room", in *Literature and Revolution* without even mentioning its homophobic content. As for the World League for Sexual Reform, weakened by fascism and Stalinism, it dissolved in 1935, with one of its two co-presidents declaring, "It is impossible to reach the goals of the WLR without at the same time fighting for a socialist revolution." (Lauritsen, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement*, 45)

76 Karlinsky, "Russia's gay literature and culture", in Duberman, *Hidden from History*, 358, 361. Karlinsky seems to fly in the face of the evidence that he himself cites when he maintains that 1905-17 period, rather than the 1920s, was the period of greatest freedom for gay/lesbian Russians.

77 Conflict between popular movements and the Catholic hierarchy have often led to rapid growth of pro-gay attitudes during periods of popular
upsurge: for example, in Quebec during the “quiet revolution” of the 1960s, and in the Spanish state after the end of Franco’s dictatorship (particularly in Bilbao), for a long time a bastion of Catholic traditionalism.

78 Starlet Cuadra, “Lesbians and gays in Nicaragua: coming out of the closet”, in Barricada Internacional (August 1991), 32-33

79 Likosky, Coming Out, 213. Evidence in Winnie Mandela’s trial that she had used charges of homosexuality as justifications for beating Soeto youths also led the ANC (after much hesitation) to condemn anti-gay prejudice and violence.

80 A bitter Hungarian joke a few years ago defined socialism as “the long, hard road that leads from capitalism to capitalism”.

81 Karlinsky, “Russia’s gay literature and culture”, in Duberman, Hidden from History, 358, 361; Laukiss, The Early Homosexual Rights Movement, 64-65, 68-69

82 Wieringa, “An anthropological critique”, in Altman, Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?, 227; Ruan and Tsai, “Male homosexuality in contemporary mainland China”, in Likosky, Coming Out, 39

83 Arguelles and Rich, “Homosexuality, homophobia and revolution”, in Duberman, Hidden from History, 447-48. Young (Guys under the Cuban Revolution) concludes from the PBP’s role that anti-gay repression in revolutionary Cuba was due to “the external tradition of European Marxism”.

The anti-gay tradition of Stalinism and its negative effects in Cuba are clear; on the other hand, the broader Marxist tradition provides many points of support for gay/lesbian liberation, historically as well as theoretically; and many “modernizing” third world regimes without any ideological references to Marxism have also been harshly anti-gay.

84 Arguelles and Rich, “Homosexuality, homophobia and revolution”, in Duberman, Hidden from History, 447, 451, 455; Young, Guys under the Cuban Revolution, 19, 27, 28; Henk van den Boogaard and Katharina van Karnebeek, “We cannot jump over our own shadow”, in Likosky, Coming Out, 86, 89, 92. The East German regime, which decriminalized homosexuality in 1968, is often given some credit for a decrease in repression in Cuba beginning in the late 1960s. The varied record of the East European bureaucratic states is not covered here because of the need to focus on the third world but this record suggests that a history of gay/lesbian organizing can have an impact even on Stalinist regimes.

85 Denis Altman says, “It is possible that with time the American model of self-conscious gay separatism will become established everywhere” (Altman, The Homosexualization of America, 217). This outcome would probably depend both on there being no victorious socialist revolutions anywhere in the world for several decades, and on a level of capitalist development everywhere in the third world sufficient to make gay ghettos materially possible there. This seems unlikely.

86 Mejía, “Introducción”, in Liberación Homosexual, 4
Suggestions for Further Reading


Boswell, John, “Revolutions, universals, and sexual categories”, in Duberman, *Hidden from History*


Carrier, Joseph M., “Gay liberation and coming out in Mexico”, in Likosky, *Coming Out*


Drucker, Peter, “The promise of gay liberation”, *Against the Current* (old series) vol. 2 no. 1 (Winter 1982)


Islam, Sharmeen, “Breaking silence”, in Ratti, *A Lotus of Another Color*

Karlinsky, Simon, “Russia’s gay literature and culture: the impact of the October Revolution”, in Duberman, *Hidden from History*

Kumar, Arvind, “Hiijras: challenging gender dichotomies”, in Ratti, *A Lotus of Another Color*


Moody, T. Dunbar et al., “Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines”, in Duberman, *Hidden from History*


———, *Social Theory, Homosexual Realities*, Gai Saber monograph no. 3, New York: Gay Academic Union, 1984

Nanda, Serena, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India*, Belmont (Ca.): Wadsworth, 1990

Ng, Vivien M., “Homosexuality and the state in late imperial China”, in Duberman, *Hidden from History*


Ross, Ellen and Rayna Rapp, “Sex and society: a
research note from social history and anthropology" (1981), in Snitow, Powers of Desire

Schalow, Paul Gordon, "Male love in early modern Japan: a literary depiction of the ‘youth’", in Duberman, Hidden from History

Schiffter Sikora, Jacobo, La Formación de una Contracultura: Homosexualismo y Sida en Costa Rica, San José: Ediciones Guayarán, 1989

“Shrouded in silence” [on Argentina] (1982), in Likosky, Coming Out

Silviera, Makeda, “Man royals and sodomites: some thoughts on the invisibility of Afro-Caribbean lesbians”, in Likosky, Coming Out

Trevisan, João S., Pervers in Paradise [on Brazil], Martin Foreman trans., London: GMP, 1986

“United Nations Women’s Decade Conference: the decade has been good for us” (1985), in Likosky, Coming Out

Van den Boogaard, Henk and Kathelijne van Kammen, “We cannot jump over our own shadow” [on Cuba], in Likosky, Coming Out

Young, Allen, Gays Under the Cuban Revolution, San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1981


Wockner, Rex, “Homosexuality in the Arab and Moslem world”, in Likosky, Coming Out

Possible References (still to be located and evaluated)

Readers of this Working Paper are urged to suggest additional useful sources that they know of; to comment on the usefulness of any of the potential sources listed below that they may have read; and whenever possible, to make or solicit donations of works on sexuality and sexual politics to the IIRE library. I am particularly eager to check on the sources marked below with an asterisk (*).


* Auregui, Carlos Luis, Homosexualidad en la Argentina

Carrier, Joseph M., Urban Mexican Male Homosexual Encounters, Ph.D. dissertation, Irvine: Univ. of California, 1975

Gays in Indonesia: Selected Articles from the Print Media, Fitzroy (Australia): Sybylla Press, 1984


ILGA, Second ILGA Pink Book, Utrecht, 1988


* Penelope, Julia and Sarah Valentine eds., Finding the Lesbians, Freedom (Calif.): Crossing Press, 1990


* Whitam, Frederick L. and Robin M. Mathy, Male Homosexuality in Four Societies: Brazil, Guatemala, the Philippines and the United States, New York: Praeger, 1986

Article [title unknown] on Jamaican lesbians and gays, Village Voice (New York; June 1992)