

# letter - OL on Gays

We consider the Los Angeles Research Group reprint from the *Guardian* Radical Forum and the introduction by the *Bird* staff to be an unprincipled attack on Marxism-Leninism and its revolutionary line on the woman question, an attack on the working class and on the proletarian family.

The October League was labelled a sexist organization. We would like to show, that far from making us sexist, our position on the homosexual question is part of a revolutionary line on the woman question. We stand with communists and revolutionaries the world over in fighting for the emancipation of women through the complete overthrow of class society, in which women's oppression is rooted. The struggle to abolish class society is founded on the principled unity of the multinational working class, men and women, and based on a consistent fight against all forms of national and sexual oppression. These are some of the conditions for revolution.

We have put this line into practice. We have played a leading role in building a national campaign around International Women's Day for the past three years, in the fight for the ERA, in building Black Women's United Front, Coalition Of Labor Union Women, the welfare rights movement, community struggles, Joann Little and Todd-Woods Defense and many, many more.

Organizationally, we have taken up the woman question through the formation of local and national women's commissions and special attention to training and recruiting women cadre, particularly working class and national minority women. Through the pages of our theoretical journal, *CLASS STRUGGLE*, we have concretely put forward our view of women and party-building (see CS, No. 1). The Chicano Resolution, CS No. 2, puts forward the first Marxist-Leninist line on the question of the Chicana. Our new resolution on the Woman Question, passed at our Third Congress (see September *CALL*), raises such demands as jobs or income now, special seniority rights for women and national minorities, adequate welfare and social protection; an end to forced sterilizations—especially of national minority women; equal pay for equal work, fully paid maternity leave.

Most importantly, the October League is fighting for women's emancipation through building a new anti-revisionist communist party. History has shown that it is only such a party—the advanced detachment of the working class—that can lead in overthrowing imperialism and lay the basis for the eventual abolition of classes under communism. It is only through the abolition of class society that women will be finally emancipated.

Many theories in the past have sprung out of the gay liberation and feminist movement, saying that "gay is revolutionary"; that men, and sometimes heterosexuals, are the enemy; that homosexuality is the solution to sexual oppression.

The *Bird* reprint does not put forward this line openly. It rather attempts to reconcile homosexuality and a bourgeois, decadent and feminist line with Marxism-Leninism. In order to do this it must divorce sexuality from all

other economic, social and political relations and say that this function alone is not influenced by classes, is simply a matter of sexual preference and that personal life may be separated from political life.

In fact, it is not possible to separate the question of sexuality from class society. We *do* believe that reproduction is the material basis for sex. This is why normal sexual relations have historically been between men and women and not between members of the same sex. The *Bird* reprint states that homosexuality has occurred historically. This is true—but at what times and under what conditions?

Engels, in *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, links the rise of homosexuality with the relative position of women and the attitude of society towards women. It has been widespread in *all* decaying societies—slave and feudal as well as capitalist. These periods—Hellenic Greece; 500 B. C. to the time of Christ; and Renaissance Europe, 14th-17th centuries—were periods where women were most degraded and oppressed in general.

Under Hitler fascism, the promotion of homosexuality was combined with the most base national and male chauvinism in the most atrocious attack on the working class, non-Aryan peoples and women that the world has ever seen. We can see the seeds of this today in decaying U.S. imperialism. The bourgeoisie promotes homosexuality through movies, artists such as David Bowie, and most recently bourgeois politicians. This is part of the general attack on the proletarian and national minority family along with the welfare system, deportations and police repression. It is one of the many cultural alternatives the bourgeoisie tries to channel us into, along with drugs, promiscuity and rock culture, in order to take the heat off the system. It plays on the oppression of women and the contradictions between men and women under capitalism. But these contradictions are non-antagonistic and can be resolved through principled struggle. Homosexuality poses these contradictions as antagonistic—that men are the cause of women's oppression rather than the system—and undermines the principled unity that is necessary for making revolution. In this it unites with feminism in viewing men as the enemy and in reforming capitalism rather than overthrowing it.

The bourgeoisie attacks homosexuality at the same time it promotes it—but these are hypocritical attacks on the victims of their system, just as it hypocritically attacks drug pushers and sexual promiscuity.

In conclusion. Homosexuality far from being revolutionary, and far from being non-class, is a bourgeois threat to the working class, women and national minorities: there is no way it can be reconciled with revolution. Its promotion is part of increased fascist attacks. As Lenin said,

I mistrust the sexual theories of the articles, dissertations, pamphlets, etc., in short, of that particular kind of literature which flourishes luxuriantly in the dirty soil

of bourgeois society. I mistrust those who are always contemplating the sexual questions, like the Indian saint his navel. . . There is no place for it in the Communist Party, in the class-conscious, fighting proletariat.

Lenin, THE WOMAN QUESTION

We would like to speak finally to the *Bird's* new advertising policy which discontinues free movement ads to organizations which exclude homosexuals and labels paid advertising with the so-called "sexist nature of the organization". This is blatant anti-communism and out and out hypocrisy. In the very same issue there are paid ads with naked women riding bicycles (p. 14) and ads for capitalist rock entrepreneur Alex Cooley (p. 14 and 15) with no comment or label whatsoever. That regards paid advertising; we think the OL deserves the same rights as other movement organizations, to receive free advertising. Further, the OL and the Georgia Communist League before it have long been supporters of *The Bird* and have contributed to it financially.

We hope that this letter will further the struggle on the *Bird* staff on this question and that the staff will see fit to unite with revolutionaries around the world on a true Marxist-Leninist stand on the woman question.

In Struggle,

Women's Commission,  
Atlanta District October League, Marxist-Leninist.

## reply

1) If the Los Angeles Research Group's article is "an unprincipled attack on Marxism-Leninism" why did the *Guardian*, the nation's leading Marxist-Leninist publication, run the article in its "Radical Forum," and give its readers the address from which a longer L.A. Research Group pamphlet on the same subject could be obtained? (The L.A. Group is composed of gay Marxist-Leninist women.)

2) The word sexist refers to a person or group which discriminates against people on the basis of their sex or sexual orientation. The October League, in barring gays from membership, clearly fits this definition. The October League protests that its struggles for women's causes prove it is not sexist toward women. But in the next breath, it refers to the *Bird's* "bourgeois, decadent, and feminist line" and says, "(homosexuality) unites with feminism in viewing men as the enemy and in reforming capitalism rather than overthrowing it."

The notion that feminism is inherently revisionary is a very shallow interpretation of the women's movement. The 1,600 women who attended a socialist-feminist conference at Antioch earlier this year were not bourgeois and decadent, and statements like OL's alienate all feminists.

3) We agree with the OL that "(homosexuality) has been widespread in *all* decaying societies." We would add that it has also been widespread in all non-decaying societies, along with heterosexuality. Homosexuality is a natural

form of human sexual expression, which has occurred throughout the ages and also occurs throughout nature. It existed among the early Iroquois and Mohaves, and exists in revolutionary Portugal today, where gay people have marched under open banners with the workers to fight for socialism.

4) In saying that Hitler's fascism promoted homosexuality, OL turns history upside down and slanders all gay people. Hitler's regime glorified the "Aryan" family, and campaigned to raise the birth rate. Hitler justified the slaughter of his SA followers in 1933 with charges that many of them were homosexuals. In Hitler's death camps, countless thousands of homosexuals were made to wear pink triangles on their shoulders even as the Jews were made to wear yellow stars of David, and they met the same fate—extermination.

5) The quote from Lenin is taken out of context. He was not discussing homosexuality, but free love or "promiscuity" and articles which promoted or discussed it in his day. In 1917 the Soviet Union abolished the Czarist sexual codes, legalizing abortion, divorce, and homosexuality. These gains were lost for the most part after Lenin died and Stalin took power, but were the original intention of the Bolsheviks.

6) The OL says, "We *do* believe that reproduction is the material basis for sex." In reply, we'd like to quote a recent letter to the editor we received: "Dear *Bird*: Have we regressed so far in the 70s that you have to use up five column inches to argue that people should have the right to fuck for some purpose other than making a baby? Really!"

The *Bird's* position is that gay people are a natural part of our society and any society, and groups which discriminate against gays are by definition sexist. The *Bird* has a longstanding policy against accepting sexist advertising, and we will reiterate our recent clarification of that policy:

Free Advertising: No free advertising space will be granted to any movement organization which excludes gays. Paid Advertising: We will still accept paid advertising from movement organizations which exclude gay people. However we will accompany any such ad with notice of the sexist nature of the organization.

—the birdstaff



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