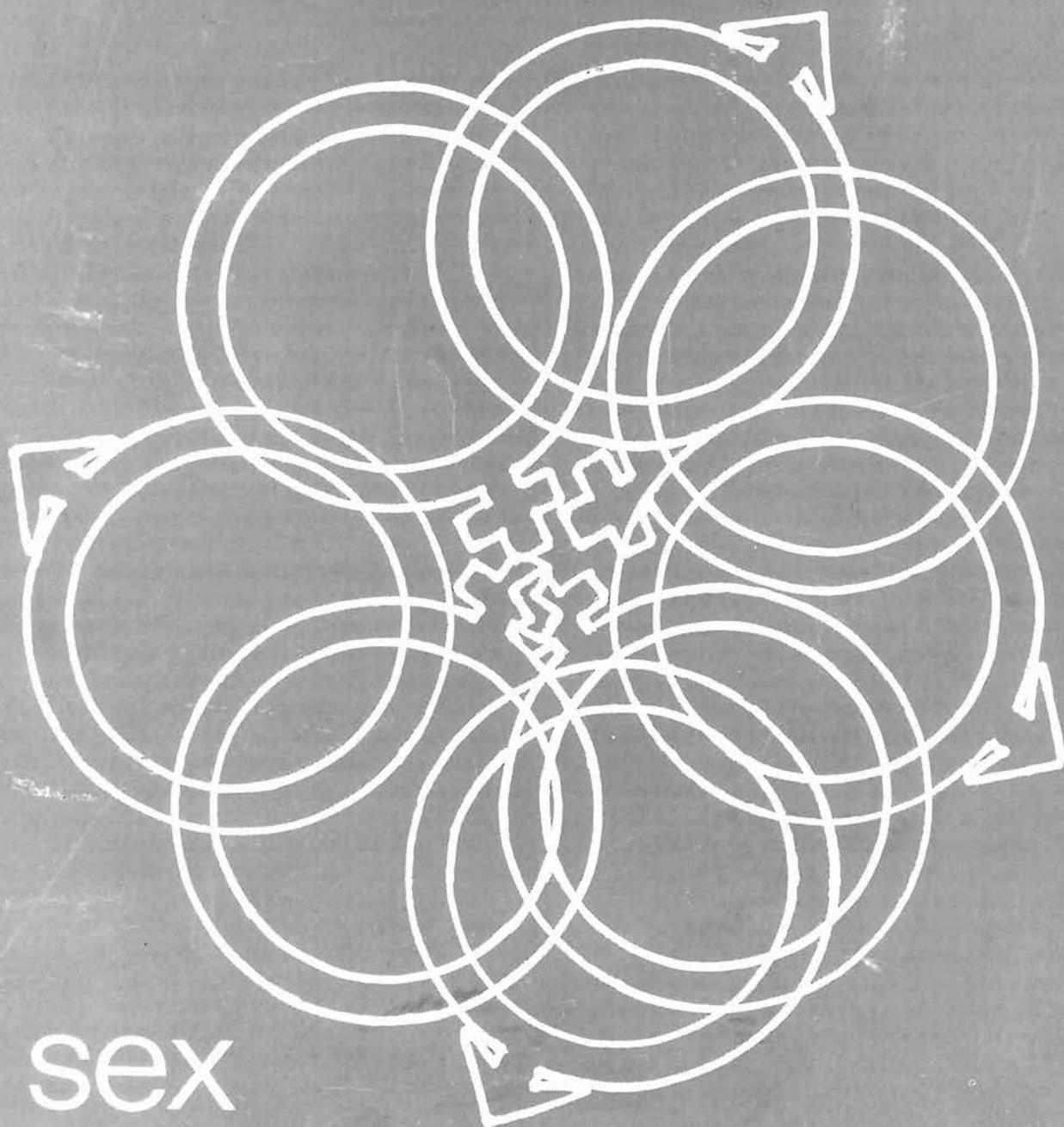


Selected works of Wilhelm Reich

EDITED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CHRIS KNIGHT



**sex
and the
class struggle**

A CHARTIST PUBLICATION

30p

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST EDITION

The Marxist movement is today hopelessly at sea when it comes to dealing with the women's movement. Since virtually no worth-while theory on the family question has been developed since Engels, and since Engels' 'Origin of the Family' is quite inadequate in a whole series of respects, the theoretical pre-condition for a genuinely revolutionary proletarian women's movement just doesn't exist.

But at least the Marxist tendencies today recognise the legitimacy of the women's movement — even if only by 'supporting' from time to time demands such as that for equal job opportunities and pay. Wilhelm Reich's work is concerned with a form of sexual oppression which is not even politically-recognised at all. The reason why the masses' sexual rights as such have remained unrecognised by the revolutionary movement for so long is in itself a failure which requires explanation.

Reich's main concern in his writings is not with the women's movement as a separate struggle. Much more is he out to initiate what might even be called a 'men's movement'. Reich is concerned with the real price the male sex pays for its dominance over women and children in the family. According to Reich, the price men pay is *sexual impotence* in various forms — ranging from the incapacity for full 'surrender' in the sexual act to the complete inability to perform it.

But this has nothing to do with politics! The screams of self-styled 'Marxists' can already be heard, protesting that the whole subject is a 'diversion'. Those who scream loudest will cry that the women's question is a 'diversion' too.

In actual fact, these related questions are in no way separable from the general struggle of the working class for state power. Our movement and class cannot conquer power without a full understanding of what we are doing. One of the things we will be doing — assuming our revolution succeeds this time on an international scale — will be to transform our family and sexual relationships in a fundamental way. We cannot hope to assume the leadership of the coming revolution without a consciousness of its full significance — even down to its effects on the deepest instinctual roots of our personal and social being.

The idea that 'sexual matters' are without political significance is reactionary through and through. So-called 'Marxists' who adopt this line reveal, firstly a contempt for the dialectical-materialist world-outlook in general, secondly, a complete ignorance of the work of Engels on the family in particular, and thirdly, an equal ignorance of the sexual legislation enacted by the Bolshevik Soviet Government under Lenin in the very first years of the Revolution.

'The roots of contradictions and psychological inconsistencies', wrote Leon Trotsky, 'lie in the disorganisation and muddle of the conditions in which people live. Psychology, after all, is determined by life.' (1) The sexual problems of the mass of men and women in capitalist society *are* a political question. They cannot be solved in a purely 'personal' way. Their only ultimate solution is the completion of the world communist revolution itself: i.e. the global destruction of capitalism and imperialism, the socialisation of the world's means of production, the re-organisation of society on the basis of relations of solidarity and, as a result of all this, the replacement of the isolated family unit by communal living as the state itself 'withers away.'

It should be remembered, incidentally that Leon Trotsky himself — in contrast to the Stalinists — by no means dismissed even the work of Sigmund Freud, whose theories were considerably more confused and reactionary than those of Reich. It is true that Reich wrote plenty of idealist rubbish. His view that the 'vast majority' of us human beings under capitalism are 'neurotics' may seem hard to accept. And it is true that even the best work of Reich — like that of Freud — must ultimately be placed within the category of *bourgeois* science. But dialectical materialism, as Trotsky wrote,

'can be applied to new spheres of knowledge only by mastering them from within. The purging of bourgeois science presupposes a mastery of bourgeois science. You will get nowhere with sweeping criticism or bald commands.'" (2)

To dismiss psychoanalysis altogether would be as stupid as to accept it uncritically. The only correct course is to master the material we are given in order to purge it. Trotsky's attitude to this question must be our own:

'The attempt to declare psychoanalysis 'in-compatible' with Marxism and simply turn one's back on Freudism is too simple, or, more accurately, too simplistic. But we are in any case not obliged to adopt Freudism. It is a working hypothesis which can produce and undoubtedly does produce deductions and conjectures with proceed along the lines of materialist psychology.'" (3)

Of Reich's best work we can hardly say less.

But what about Reich himself? Wasn't he a reactionary? Didn't he go mad? This much-loved line of defence must be answered here.

Reich's political views — on the degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy, the need for world revolution, the need for an anti-fascist workers' united front in Germany, etc. etc. — at one time seemed to

be approaching those of Leon Trotsky. Like virtually all middle-class intellectuals of prominence to the 'left' of Stalinism in the 'thirties, however, he came soon to lose faith in the fighting capacity of the working class. Like the advocates of the theory of 'State Capitalism', he began, in his despair, to consider Stalinist Russia to be little better than Nazi Germany. Denounced by the Fascists as a Communist of the very worst sort, and by the Stalinists as a Trotskyite agent of Fascism, Reich developed an almost pathological and reactionary (however understandable) hatred of all politicians as such. His initial moves from the German Communist Party towards the Trotskyists came to nothing when he realised that the latter was increasingly becoming obsessed.

Reich turned inwards. He abandoned the arena of political action in which his theories had developed. Instead he turned towards an increasingly apolitical preaching of the need for personal self-redemption through sex-love. His hatred of all forms of 'authoritarian society' never died, but before long the capitalist world, virulently hostile to his theories on all sides, had driven him literally mad. He ended up convincing himself that he had discovered a 'universal life-energy' which he called 'orgone', which he said was coloured blue. To cure people from their sexual troubles, he put them into an 'orgone box' where this 'energy' was reflected into them. Needless to say, the whole concept was a form of self-hallucination. Its psychological function was clear enough: his real social and political impotence was being compensated for in his imagination by the delusion that the all-powerful life-giving forces to the universe were in his hands.

Conditions determine consciousness. Fascist and

Stalinist counter-revolution in Reich's case transformed him from a confused yet in many ways revolutionary thinker into a semi-religious, anti-political charlatan and crank. Early in his life he had broken from the Freudians and from the whole of official psychology on a single issue: their belief that mental disturbances could be cured, without a political transformation of society, simply by injections, pills, or at best by psychoanalytic therapy administered to the individual. He ended his life, tragically, by renouncing his own greatest theoretical conquests, believing a man's repressed love-life could be emancipated simply by placing him in an 'orgone box' made of wood and metal foil.

It is fortunate that Reich's best work remains immune from the effects of his own political self-destruction. Although Reich was never a Trotskyist, we can say the same about the writings of Harold Isaacs, Felix Morrow and a host of other one-time supporters or sympathisers with Bolshevism. If Reich's writings are today being understood more than ever in his own time, it can only be because, now as always, conditions determine consciousness. The revolutionary workers' movement on a world scale is once more becoming strong, allowing communists to face squarely even the most difficult questions as a precondition for the seizure of state power.

Chris Knight. April 1974.

1. Leon Trotsky, 'Problems of Everyday Life' (Deutscher Anthology p 303)
2. Leon Trotsky, 'Culture and Socialism' (Deutscher Anthology p 311)
3. Ibid. (Deutscher Anthology p 312)

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INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

The following selections from Reich may not be representative of the author's total output. He wrote a good deal of almost complete nonsense. But the aim has been to choose some of his best writings, which provide the outline of a position on sexual questions which at least partly fills an otherwise serious gap in the programme of the working-class movement.

Reich was not very familiar with Marx's writings. If he had been, he might have strengthened his arguments in the eyes of socialists by showing where his theories fitted in with the analysis of sexual questions already developed embryonically by Marx in his early writings. Reich in this pamphlet speaks for himself, and a critique of his views here might seem superfluous. Since Marx's own evaluation of the sexual question is very little known, however, the most valuable introduction to Reich's ideas might be a survey of this aspect of Marx's thought.

Marx's standpoint was the materialist premise that man is, however different from the animals in other respects, a part of nature, with natural instincts, drives and needs which can only be satisfied from the world outside himself.¹ In sustaining his private physical existence, a man (like any animal in this respect) breathes, eats, drinks and so on, in a continuous relationship with nature both inside and outside himself.² But the individual of any species (human or animal) does not spend all its time merely preserving its own self. It also participates in another kind of activity, which is productive in relation to the species. This is its 'life-producing-life,' its 'species-life' — the supreme manifestation of which is sex. Here its need is for another being of its own kind.

Before the evolutionary appearance of man, 'life-producing-life' existed in the universe only as a biological activity — primarily as sex. But with the appearance of human production, this kind of life began to be carried on on a qualitatively higher plane and in a new form. As they engaged in *labour*, the first human individuals were 'reproducing their

species' not only sexually but in a new way, by producing and reproducing the material wealth (food, dwellings, tools etc) which formed their communal basis of life. This was the *essentially human* expression of life, in which men *needed one another* as much as they needed nature itself.

But since the natural model for this 'life-producing-life' (in which men produced *one another's* lives instead of merely their own) had been the process of *procreation* in the animal world, sex remained, as it were, the essentially human activity in its natural or biological form.

Hence Marx wrote of the relation of man to woman as the 'immediate, natural and necessary' social relationship, and as the *essential* human tie in natural form. It is worth quoting Marx here in full:

'The immediate, natural and necessary relation of human being to human being is also the relation of *man* to *woman*. In this *natural* species-relationship man's relation to nature is directly his relation to man, and his relation to man is directly his relation to nature, to his own *natural* function. Thus, in this relation is *sensuously revealed*, reduced to an observable *fact*, the extent to which human nature has become nature for man and to which nature has become human nature for him. From this relationship man's whole level of development can be assessed. It follows from the character of this relationship how far *man* has become, and has understood himself as, a *species-being*, a *human being*. The relation of man to woman is the *most natural* relation of human being to human being. It indicates, therefore, how far man's *natural* behaviour has become *human*, and how far his *human* essence has become a *natural* essence for him, how far his *human nature* has become *nature* for him. It also shows how far man's needs have become *human* needs, and consequently how far this other person, as a person, has become one of his needs, and to what extent he is in his individual existence at the same time a social being.'

(*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Karl Marx, Early Writings*, ed., T.B. Bottomore, (London 1963), P 154.)

'Species-life' in its natural form, then, was sexual life—with all that that implied in terms of relations of reciprocity, exchange, productiveness and so on. In its new social or cultural form, it was economically-productive life — again with all that that implied in terms of exchange, reciprocity etc. Human production, in other words (and it was in

1. 'Man is directly a *natural being*. As a natural being, and as a living natural being he is, on the one hand, endowed with *natural powers* and *faculties*, which exist in him as tendencies and abilities, as *drives*. On the other hand, as a natural, embodied, sentient, objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited being, like animals and plants. The *objects* of his drives exist outside himself as *objects* independent of him, yet they are objects of his *needs*, essential *objects* which are indispensable to the exercise and confirmation of his faculties' — *Karl Marx Early Writings*, ed. T.B. Bottomore, London 1963, pp 206-7.
2. Marx refers to the fact that life 'for man as for animals, has its physical basis in the fact that man (like animals) lives from inorganic nature' — *ibid* p 127.

his production that man first distinguished himself from the animals¹ was from the start a *dual* process of species - life:

... the production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship.

(Ibid. p 18.)

The natural relationship, sex, was itself, however, social in that two individuals were required for it, while the social relationship, labour, was of course itself a relationship with nature.

(See the long passage quoted above and on previous page.)

Marx approached the question of the family from a historical standpoint. From the dawn of human existence on earth 'the family' has existed in the loosest, biological sense of that term. It has always been a fact, as Marx put it,

that men, who daily remake their own life, being to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and wife, parents and children, the family.

(Ibid p 17.)

But, to begin with, there was no conflict between the two forms of species-life: between sex and labour, family and industry, woman and man. As a separate institution, isolated from the wider community and counterposed to it, the family did not exist. Both production and procreation were carried on through the clan, and were the spontaneous, enjoyable expressions of men's and women's own lives, under their reciprocal and communal control.

In this earlier period, as under capitalism, men's and women's lives consisted of acts of exchange. But the difference then was that these acts were between individuals as consciously social beings:

Exchange, both of human activity within production itself and also of human products with each other, is equivalent to species-activity and species-enjoyment whose real, conscious and true being is social activity and social enjoyment. Since human nature is the true communal nature of man, men create

1. 'Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. . . This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce' — Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Parts I and III, ed R. Pascal, New York, 1947, p 7.

and produce their communal nature by their natural action, they produce their social being which is no abstract, universal power over against single individuals, but the nature of each individual, his own activity, his own life, his own enjoyment, his own

(*Karl Marx, Early Texts*, ed., David McLellan, (Oxford 1971) pp 193-94

The motive of exchange was not private gain, but the pleasure of giving, since here (as in the sexual relation itself) one's partner's enjoyment was one's own. Marx notes:

In so far as man is human and thus in so far as his feelings and so on are human, the affirmation of the object by another person is equally his own enjoyment.

(Ibid pp 178-79)

At a certain point in history, however, a change took place. Instead of the earlier relations of sexual and economic reciprocity there arose

Property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband.

(*The German Ideology*, p 21.)

Woman was now exploited, both sexually and economically. Species-life itself, in an extraordinary contradiction, was now subordinated to its opposite: the lust for purely private gain. The cause was an economic one: the rise of agriculture, beginning as the labour of women and children on the land.¹ The family as a definite institution has now arisen, to the extent that the husband's sexual dominance now isolated it from the wider community and subordinated it one-sidedly to his private greed. Marx wrote:

This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others.

(*The German Ideology*, pp 21-22.)

With the addition of slaves to the family, with 'the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another', (Ibid.) with the rule of certain families over others and with the development of the forces of production resulting from the new, compulsory form of labour, the whole structure of class-society and the state came into being. The essence of the new form of production remained the same, however. As Marx put it:

It makes species-life into a means of individual life.

(*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Karl Marx Early Writings*, p 127.)

Just as the male treats sexual life (species-life in

1. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Karl Marx Early Writing*, p 114: 'The rule of private property begins with the ownership of land, which is its basis.'

its natural form) as a mere means of satisfying personal lust, so the whole system treats communal production and reproduction as a means of gratifying the wants of individuals motivated only by personal greed. As Marx explains:

. . . *life activity, productive life*, now appears to man only as *means* for the satisfaction of a need, the need to maintain physical existence. Productive life is, however, species-life. It is life creating life.

(Loc. cit.)

The contradiction is therefore total. The very activity in which men and women go beyond themselves, the very activity in which they are most human — producing for others rather than merely themselves — becomes subordinated to purely private, animal greed. This is reflected in the French bourgeois revolutionists' declaration of the right of property, according to which:

The sphere in which man functions as a species-being is degraded to a level below the sphere where he functions as a partial being.

since the right of property is conceived as the right to enjoy one's fortune and to dispose of it as one will; without regard for other men and independently of society.

(*On the Jewish Question, Karl Marx Early Writings*, pp 25-26).

Since individuals act independently of society, this means that society acts independently of individuals. Social production — human species-life in both its forms — appears as a separate thing, an alien power opposed to the individuals of whose activities it is composed. To say that man alienates himself, therefore, is the same as to say that he opposes himself as a private being to his own human essence, so that everything about himself is turned upside-down:

. . . to say that man alienates himself is the same as to say that the society of this alienated man is a caricature of his real human nature, his true species-life, that therefore his activity appears to him as a suffering, his own creation appears as an alien power, his wealth as poverty, the natural tie that binds him to other men appears as an unnatural tie and the separation from other men as his true being; his life appears as a sacrifice of life, the realization of his essence as a loss of the reality of his life, his production as a production of his own nothingness, his power over the object as the power of the object over him, and he himself, the master of his creation, appears as its slave.

(*Karl Marx Early Texts*, p 194).

In its original form, productive exchange, in labour as much as in sex, had been an enjoyment for the individuals participating in it. Illustrating this, Marx pictured how matters would have appeared had he and his reader been able to conclude (in the modern world) an exchange-act of such a kind:

Supposing that we had produced in a human manner; each of us would in his production have doubly affirmed himself and his fellow men. I would have (1) objectified in my production my individuality and its peculiarity and thus both in my activity enjoyed an individual expression of my life and also in looking at the object have had the individual pleasure of realizing that my personality was objective, visible to the senses and thus a power raised beyond all doubt. (2) In your enjoyment of use of my product I would have had the direct enjoyment of realizing that I had both satisfied a human need by my work and also objectified the human essence and therefore fashioned for another human being the object that met his need. (3) I would have been for you the mediator between you and the species and thus been acknowledged and felt by you as a completion of your own essence and a necessary part of yourself and have thus realized that I am confirmed both in your thought and in your love. (4) In my expression of my life I would have fashioned your expression of your life, and thus in my own activity have realised my own essence, my human, my communal essence.

(Ibid p 202).

In its new, alienated, form, this exchange-process was still the essentially human life — the species-life of man — but congealed or crystallized as something external to human beings. It had re-appeared as trade, money, property-relations and so on. Thus, in Marx's words,

exchange or trade is the social species-act, the communal nature, the social commerce and integration of man inside private property and thus the exterior, externalized species-act.

(*Karl Marx Early Texts*, p 196).

As this seemingly external power became more and more powerful, men bowed down before it, particularly in its form as money:

Money is the alienated essence of man's work and existence; this essence dominates him and he worships it.

(*On the Jewish Question, Karl Marx Early Writings*, p 37).

From the standpoint of the producer, exchange remained, as before, a process of gift-giving. But it was no longer reciprocal. Since no equivalent gifts were received in return, the model of this form of exchange was the ritual of religious sacrifice:

If my own activity does not belong to me, but is an alien, forced, activity, to whom does it belong? To a being *other* than myself. And who is this being? The *gods*? It is apparent in the earliest stages of advanced production, e.g. temple building, etc. in Egypt, India, Mexico, and in the service rendered to gods, that the product belonged to the gods.

(Ibid pp 129-130).

The institutions of celibacy (sacrifice of sexual enjoyment), animal-sacrifice (sacrifice of livestock as wealth), human sacrifice (the principle carried to its extreme) and so on, having originated in the earliest centres of civilization, set the pattern for the next few thousand years, culminating economically in the capitalist system, in which the life and production of virtually the entire globe are offered up. Writing of this one-way gift-giving or self-sacrifice in the modern world, Marx explains:

...the more the worker expends himself in work the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life, and the less he belongs to himself. It is just the same as in religion. The more of himself man attributes to God the less he has left in himself.

(*Early Writings*, p 122.)

Referring to the morality of capitalism, Marx writes:

Its principal thesis is the renunciation of life and of human needs. (Ibid p 171)

Naturally, this includes the renunciation of sexual life and needs. As just one example, Marx points to a suggestion made by J.S. Mill:

Mill proposes that public commendation should be given to those who show themselves abstemious in sexual relations, and public condemnation to those who sin against the sterility of marriage. Is this not the moral doctrine of asceticism? (Ibid p 174).

Life itself, under capitalism, appears as 'the sacrifice of life' (Ibid p 134).

Work is a process of sacrifice, of self-alienation, in that, paradoxically, it appears as the very opposite of instinctual or natural species-life. It is a process of self-alienation in that:

the work is *external* to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, *forced labour*. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. (Ibid p 124).

All this, in a sense — as has been seen — stemmed from men's sexual dominance over women and children in the family. This, then, is the price

which has been paid. To be in a one-sided process of giving without receiving is to be de-humanized. It is the same as in the sexual relationship:

Let us assume *man* to be *man*, and his relation to the world to be a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust, etc. . . . If you love without evoking love in return, i.e. if you are not able, by the *manifestation* of yourself as a loving person, to make yourself a *beloved person*, then your love is impotent and a misfortune.

(*Early Writings*, p 194).

In other words, the system through which men treat women as mere 'instruments of production'¹ ends up treating men as mere 'things' — impotent objects — too. The sacrifice of women's lives becomes the sacrifice of men's.

In the same way, on the economic plane, it is not merely the worker who sacrifices his life. There is another renunciation.

...because the capitalist too brings a *sacrifice*, the sacrifice of *abstinence*, in that he grows wealthy instead of eating up his product directly.

(*Grundrisse*, (trans. M. Nicolaus, Harmondsworth, 1973), p 612.

Marx explains the principle on which the capitalist has to act:

The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre or balls, or to the public house, and the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence etc. the more you will be able to save and the *greater* will become your treasure which neither moth nor rust will corrupt — your *capital*. The less you *are*, the less you express your life, the more you *have*, the greater is your *alienated* life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being.

(*Early Writings*, p 171.)

The attempt to get without giving — to hold without surrendering — leads, in economics as much as in sex, to the loss of all capacity for real human life.

The act required to re-animate the human exchange-process, correspondingly, must start from both ends. On the one hand, the materially-productive but passive class (and sex) must move to regain:

1. Marx sees that the system draws an exact parallel between, on the one hand, woman (in opposition to man) as the naturally-productive sex and, on the other, labour (in opposition to capital) as the socially-productive class. The class-relation is thus a duplication (on the social level) of the sexual relation, and includes the sexual relation. Consequently, just as the bourgeois 'sees in his wife a mere instrument of production', so the bourgeoisie sees the working class ('the greatest productive power of all the instruments of production') as a mere supply of wealth-producing machines. *Communist Manifesto*, Marx Engels *Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow 1962, pp 50-51; *Poverty of Philosophy*, quoted by D. McLellan, *The Thoughts of K. Marx*, (London 1971), p 125; *Early Writings* p 153.

the activity, wealth and power of which they have been robbed. This process begins with the development of *organization*:

... the workers begin to form combinations (Trades' Unions) against the bourgeoisie; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts. Here and there the contest breaks out into riots. (Communist Manifesto, p 42)

On the other hand, a part of the materially-unproductive yet active class (and sex) must move to *surrender* what they have seized. This process begins with the development of *theory*:

... a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole. (Ibid p 43).

The whole exchange-act, in other words, needs 'a passive element, a material basis', (*Early Writings* p 53) but this itself needs to become active, to become its opposite, a process which it can only complete 'once the lightning of thought has penetrated deeply into this virgin soil of the people.' (Ibid p 59.) Marx sums up the relation of reciprocity involved here by writing:

Just as philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy. (Loc. cit.)

In all this, Marx is not merely using a sexual metaphor. Rather he sees the parallel as a real one produced by the historical dialectic itself. Class domination *includes* (and starts with) sexual domination. Everything else follows from that. For example, Marx takes the question of prostitution as merely something already included within the class-relation of labour to capital itself. Capitalist economic principles, in and of themselves, writes Marx, can make no objection.

if I earn money by the sale of my body, by prostituting it to another person's lust. (*Early Writings*, p 173.)

On the contrary: prostitution is the very principle of capitalist economic morality—applied, however, to the natural species-relation instead of to the social one:

Prostitution is only a *specific* expression of the *general* prostitution of the labourer.

(*Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts*, ed. D.J. Struik, (New York, 1964), p 133.)

Prostitution is only the system carried to its logical extreme, in which

Even the species-relation itself, the relation between man and woman, becomes an object of commerce. (*Early Writings*, p 37.)

In the same way, so far as male dominance prevails,

marriage is incontestably a form of exclusive private property. (*Early Texts*, p 146.) (and in fact a kind of prostitution, private rather than public).

(*Communist Manifesto*, p 51.)

Sexual oppression, for Marx, then, was *included* in the oppression of labour.¹ In the same way, the alienation of sexual life was included in the alienation of species-life more generally. Capital included male sexual dominance, and its conquest could only include the re-discovery by men and women of their genuinely human, naturally-productive lives. This re-discovery, however, would be a re-discovery of more than that. In a historical perspective, it turns out that the epoch of capitalism has been a necessary stage:

Universal prostitution appears as a necessary phase of the development of the social character of personal talents, abilities, capacities and activities.

(*Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicolaus, Harmondsworth, 1973, p 163.)

Its result has been the establishment of an immediately global form of intercourse, a 'universal development of productive forces' and 'a universal intercourse between men.' (*German Ideology*, p 25).

Admittedly, this at the moment takes the alienated form of trade, money, and general capitalist wealth. It seems to be the very opposite of human species-life, human experience and communally productive enjoyment. 'In fact, however,' writes Marx,

when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive powers etc. of individuals, produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature — those of his own nature as well as those of so called 'nature'? What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution — i.e. the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previous established yardstick — an end in itself? What is this, if not a situation where man does not produce himself in any determined form, but produces his totality? Where he does not seek to remain something formed by the past, but is in the absolute movement of becoming? (*Grundrisse*, quoted in: *Karl Marx Early Texts*.)

Money, trade, capital and so on — embodied in the machines, roads, ships, communication-media and so on of modern civilization — are the very body of

1. . . 'all human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production' — *Early Writings*, p 132.

the human species, our actual limbs, nerves and reproductive organs, which have been prostituted, alienated from us, so that we do not even recognize them as our own at all.¹ Separated from one another, we cannot even see ourselves as a species, let alone enjoy our own 'inorganic body'. (Loc cit.)

But just as all this is true, so is it certain that in the communist revolution the forces separating us will be dissolved; and that then the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world-history. . . the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers,

1. Marx even says that this alienation of man 'turns the advantage he has over animals into a disadvantage in that his inorganic body, nature, is torn from him' - *Early Writings* p 128.

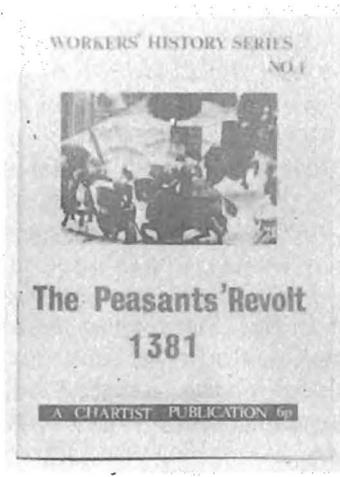
be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). Universal dependence, this natural form of the world-historical co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them.

(*German Ideology*, pp 27-28.)

'All emancipation', according to Marx, is bringing back man's world and his relationships to man himself.

(*Early Texts* p 108.)

Chris Knight, January 1976



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THE BEST OF WILHELM REICH

(Extracts from his writings)

1

Psychic health depends upon orgasmic potency, this is, on the capacity for surrender in the acme of sexual excitation in the natural sexual act. Its basis is the un-neurotic character attitude of capacity for love. Mental illness is a result of a disturbance in the natural capacity for love. In the case of orgasmic impotence, from which a vast majority of humans are suffering, biological energy is dammed up, thus becoming the source of all kind of irrational behaviour. The cure of psychic disturbances requires in the first place the establishment of the natural capacity for love. It depends as much upon social as upon psychic conditions.

Psychic disturbances are the result of the sexual chaos brought about by the nature of our society. This chaos has, for thousands of years, served the function of making people submissive to existing conditions, in other words, of internationalising the external mechanization of life. It serves the purpose of bringing about the *psychic anchoring* of a mechanized and authoritarian civilization by way of making people lack self-confidence.

The vital energies, under conditions, regulate themselves spontaneously, without compulsive duty of compulsive morality. The latter are a sure indication of the existence of antisocial tendencies. Antisocial behaviour springs from *secondary drives which owe their existence to the suppression of natural sexuality*.

The individual brought up in an atmosphere which negates life and sex acquires a pleasure anxiety (fear of pleasurable excitation) which is represented physiologically in chronic muscular spasms.

The character structure of man today — who is perpetuating a patriarchal, authoritarian culture some four to six thousand years old — is characterised by *an armouring against nature within himself and against social misery outside himself*. This armouring of the character is the basis of loneliness, helplessness, craving for authority, fear of responsibility, mystical longing, sexual misery or impotent rebelliousness as well as of resignation of an unnatural and pathological type. Human beings have taken a hostile attitude towards that in themselves which is living, and have alienated themselves from it. This alienation is not of biological, but of social and economic origin. It is not found in human history before the development of the patriarchal social order.

Since then, duty has taken the place of the natural enjoyment of work and activity. The average character structure of human beings has changed in the direction

of impotence and fear of living, so that authoritarian dictatorships not only can establish themselves, but can even justify themselves by pointing to existing human attitudes, such as lack of responsibility and infantilism.

The formation of character in the authoritarian mould has as its central point, not parental love, but the *authoritarian family*. Its chief instrument is the suppression of sexuality in the infant and the adolescent.

Owing to the split in the human character structure of today, nature and culture, instinct and morality, sexuality and achievement, are considered incompatible. That unity of culture and nature, work and love, morality and sexuality for which mankind is forever longing, this unity will remain a dream as long as man does not permit the satisfaction of the biological demands of natural (orgasmic) sexual gratification. Until then, true democracy and responsible freedom will remain an illusion, and helpless submission to existing social conditions will characterize human existence.

2

The prime necessity is for clear professional insight into the situation and structure of bourgeois science in general. It is individualistically fragmented in a hundred thousand ways, and serves the careerism of junior scientists and the personal spleen of senior ones. No two researchers understand one another in the same field of specialisation. Not only the language, but the choice of subjects is academic: just compare, say, the number of dissertations about the details of the brain capillaries of chronic alcoholics—with the number of investigations into the social conditions which make men take to drink. The more immediate the relevance of the subject to life, the more alienated is bourgeois science, the more grotesque its theories, and the further it loses itself in disputes over these theories. Mathematics is thus most free from the influence of bourgeois thought, whereas tubercular research has yet to investigate the effects of malnutrition and bad housing conditions on the human lungs. As for psychiatry, where the most sterile narrow-mindedness disports itself, let it merely be said that this science, whose duty it was to work out the basic principles of mental hygiene, functions as if constructed with the sole purpose of making this impossible. We will content ourselves with these examples in order to indicate that marxist scientific investigation must be competent as regards pure technical merit, and not merely surpass bourgeois science but further become a centre of attraction for young intellectuals and scientists such as we shall

urgently require after the revolution.

Marxist science cannot be developed by simply transferring the slogans of the class struggle to science and inserting the label 'class struggle' everywhere; it can only be developed from the investigations, problems and results of the individual technical fields themselves. It must be factually demonstrated just *where* bourgeois science falls short, *why* it does so, where the bourgeois world-view stands in the way of cognition, *how* it does so, etc. Then, after this has been done—really, materially achieved — only then does one have the right to call oneself a revolutionary scientist and to work out the relations of the individual branches of science to the question of the economic class struggle.

3

Mental illness

Those familiar with polemics within bourgeois science will have convinced themselves of the futility of any attempt to dispose of the fallacious opposing view by means of debate. Freud discovered that mental sickness is a consequence of sexual repression. The lunatic asylums, psychopathic treatment centres and mental hospitals of the capitalist countries are full to bursting as a result of bourgeois sexual economy. One joker worked out recently that, judging by the increase in the number of mentally sick, the whole population of the USA will be insane in 250 years time. This is by no means as improbable as it sounds. Until a few years ago it was possible to hope that Freud's revolutionary discoveries would prevail in psychiatry and that the question of the prevention of neuroses would thus be a matter for eager discussion. This would have constituted the first step towards a controversy between marxist and bourgeois views on the subject, without the word 'marxism' ever having been mentioned. Instead of this, traditional psychiatry remained intact, and maintained its intellectual patronage of the nonsensical notion of genetic disposition as the cause of mental illness. Indeed, it took command of wide sectors of psychoanalysis. A leading psychoanalyst recently said that one should not bother about the prevention of neuroses, but concern oneself with individual therapy. Naturally! Because the question of preventing neuroses opens up the whole question of the bourgeois sexual order and the existence of religion and morality. It would be stupid to attempt to attack Freud's scientific errors in a 'marxist' manner by denouncing him as a reactionary. If one concretely demonstrates where Freud was a natural scientist of genius and where a bourgeois philosopher of the most ancient hue, one would be performing genuine, fruitful, revolutionary marxist work.

Can one therefore hope to decide the battle on the scientific front through scientific discussion? Not at all. But this doesn't mean that one can at this point decline

all discussion. On the contrary, one must learn from discussions why and where the bourgeois scientist is thinking wrongly and overlooking the most essential factors. Only thus can one train oneself. But the real battle is being fought elsewhere. To stick to the example of sexual science: no orthodox bourgeois psychiatrist will ever accept the thesis that neuroses, psychoses, manias, etc., are the consequences of a decadent sexual economy in the masses. The broad masses, by contrast, are very interested in such questions simply because they suffer heavily as a result of them — because psychic misery itself and the narrow-mindedness of the psychiatrists (agents of the bourgeois sexual order as they are) fight it out concretely in their very bodies. I can assure you that the average working youth better understands the connection between repressed sexuality, mental depression and disturbances to the ability to work than most of the world's psychiatrists put together.

4

If one enquires into the origin of instinctual frustration, one goes beyond the confines of psychology; one enters the field of sociology and deals with problems basically different from those of psychology. The question as to why society demands the suppression of the instincts can no longer be answered psychologically. It is social, more strictly, economic interests which cause this phenomenon. Political psychology — notwithstanding the reproach of my opponents that I mix politics with science — begins precisely with this scientific question.

When an adolescent learns that the suppression of his natural sexual strivings is due not to biological factors (say, a death-instinct), but, rather, to definite interests of present-day society: that, further, parents and teachers are only unconscious executive organs of this social power—then he will not consider this merely a highly interesting scientific thesis, but he will begin to comprehend his misery, will deny its divine origin and being to rebel against his parents and the powers they represent. Perhaps for the first time, he will begin to use his critical faculties and to think about things. This is one of the many consequences which comprise what I have called sex politics.

5

Needs and instincts

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the individual comes into the world, psychologically speaking, as a bundle of needs and corresponding instincts. Being a social creature, the individual with all his needs is immediately placed in the midst of society — not only the close society of the family but also, indirectly, through the economic conditions of family life, of society at large. Reduced to the most simple formula,

the economic structure of society — through many intermediary links such as the class association of the parents, the economic conditions of the family, its ideology, the parents' relationship to one another etc. — enters into a reciprocal relation with the instincts, or ego, of the new-born. Just as his ego changes his environment, so the changed environment reacts back upon his ego. The needs are partially satisfied, and to that extent there is harmony. To a major extent, however, there arises a contradiction between the instinctual needs and the social order, of which the family (and later the school) act as the representative. This contradiction produces a conflict which leads to a change, and as the individual is the weaker opponent, the change occurs within his psychological structure.

6

Freud distinguished between three systems in the psychological apparatus: the conscious, comprising the perceptive function of the sensory apparatus and all feelings and ideas that are actually conscious; the pre-conscious, including all those ideas and attitudes which are not within the conscious at a particular moment but which can become conscious at any time. . . ; and the unconscious, Freud's real discovery, which is characterised by the fact that its contents cannot become conscious because a 'pre-conscious' censorship prohibits it. This censorship is nothing mystical but includes rules and prohibitions taken over from the outside world.

7

Everything instinctual is a reaching out for pleasure and an attempt to avoid unpleasure. An unpleasurable tension arising from a need can be removed only by satisfying the need. The aim of the instinct is therefore to get rid of instinctual tension by removing an irritation at the source of the instinct. This satisfaction is pleasurable.

8

Since everything that gives pleasure attracts and everything that gives unpleasure repels, the pleasure principle is a form of movement and change. Its source is the organic instinctual apparatus, and, particularly, sexual chemistry. After each satisfaction of a need, followed by a short period of rest, the instinctual apparatus tenses itself like a spring again and again. Metabolic processes are possibly at the root of this tension. . .

Freud brackets all limitations and social necessities which diminish these fundamental needs or defer their satisfaction under the concept of the 'reality principle.' The reality principle is, in part, directly opposed to the pleasure principle insofar as it completely prohibits certain satisfactions, and in part, it modifies the pleasure principle insofar as it forces the individual to accept substitute satisfactions or to defer satisfaction. For example, an infant may only receive food at certain hours;

a girl during the years of puberty may not, in the society of today, immediately satisfy her natural sexual needs.

9

'Reality' principle

But the definition of the reality principle as a social demand remains formalistic unless it makes full allowance for the fact that the reality principle as it exists today is only the principle of *our* society. There exist many idealist deviations in psychoanalysis concerning the concept of the reality principle. For example, it is often presented as an absolute. Adaptation to reality is interpreted simply as adaptation to society, which, applied in pedagogy or in the therapy of neuroses, is unquestionably a conservative view. To be concrete, the reality principle of the capitalist era imposes upon the proletarian a maximum limitation of his needs, while appealing to religious values such as modesty and humility. It also imposes a monogamous form of sexuality, etc. All this is founded on economic conditions; the ruling class has a reality principle which serves the perpetuation of its power. If the proletariat is brought up to accept this reality principle — if it is presented to him as absolutely valid, e.g. in the name of culture — this means an affirmation of the proletarian's exploitation and of capitalist society as a whole.

10

Psychoanalysis

As it became clear in the course of research that the unconscious contains much else besides the actually repressed material, Freud decided that it was necessary to supplement his theory of the structure of the psychological apparatus. He proceeded to draw a distinction between the id, the ego and the super-ego.

The id, again, is not anything supernatural but is an expression of the biological sector of the personality. A part of it is unconscious in the sense just described, that is to say it belongs to what has actually been repressed.

But what is repression? It is a process taking place between the ego and the urges of the id. Every child is born with instincts and acquires wishes during its childhood which it cannot satisfy because society in both the broader and narrower sense—the family —will not tolerate it (incest wish, anal eroticism, exhibitionism, sadism etc.) Social life, in the person of educators, demands that the child should suppress these instincts. The child—which has only a weak ego and chiefly obeys the pleasure principle — often succeeds in doing this

only by banishing the wish from his consciousness and refusing to know anything more about it. Thus the wish becomes unconscious by repression. Another, more social way of dealing with unfulfillable wishes is sublimation, which is the counterpart of repression: instead of being repressed, the instinct is diverted into socially acceptable activity.

Thus we see that psychoanalysis cannot conceive of the child without society. The child exists for it only as a being in society. Social existence exercises a continuous effect on the primitive instincts, limiting, re-shaping or encouraging them. The two fundamental instincts react differently to this effect. Hunger is more stringent, more inexorable and demands immediate satisfaction more violently than the sexual instinct; in no case can it be suppressed like the latter. The sexual instinct is modifiable, plastic, capable of sublimation; its partial tendencies can be reversed into their very opposites, but cannot completely forego satisfaction.

11

The motive force of suppression is the self-preservation instinct of the ego. It gains control of the ego, and psychological development is the product of the conflict between them. If we do not think of suppression as a mechanism and agree for a moment to ignore its effect, we may say that suppression is a social problem because the contents and forms of suppression depend on the social existence of the individual. This social existence is ideologically concentrated in a sum of rules, prescriptions and prohibitions—that is to say in the super-ego, large portions of which are themselves unconscious.

12

Thus, side by side with the satisfaction of instinctual wishes, the refusal of these wishes plays a dominant role as a motive force of psychological development. The contrast between the ego and the outside world eventually becomes an inner contradiction, in that an inhibiting force — the super-ego—begins to form within the psychological apparatus under the influence of the outside world. What was originally a fear of punishment becomes a moral inhibition.

13

Freud made the discovery that the unconscious of neurotics — that is, the vast majority of people in our civilization — contains essentially infantile, cruel, anti-social impulses. This finding is correct. But it obscured another fact, the fact, namely, that the unconscious also contains many impulses which represent natural biological demands, such as the sexual desire of adolescents or of people tied down in an unhappy marriage. The intensity of the later infantile and antisocial impulses derives, historically and economically, from the non-gratification of these natural demands; the damned-up libidinal energy partly reinforces primitive infantile impulses, partly creates entirely new ones, mostly of an anti-social nature, such as the desire for exhibitionism or impulses to sex murder.

14

The anti-social unconscious impulses — as far as they are really antisocial and not just regarded as such by moralists — are a result of moral regulation and will continue to exist as long as that regulation exists.

15

Ethnological research shows that such impulses are absent in primitive peoples up to a definite point of economic development and begin to make their appearance only after social repression of normal love-life has become an established feature.

16

Sexual economy

I should like to point out categorically that I am not a psychoanalyst and avoid representing my views as coming under its auspices. I was indeed active in the psychoanalytic movement for fifteen years, but my theories of *sexual economy* and *political psychology* are not a continuation of Freud's instinctual theory and psychology of mass behaviour. I am concerned to leave no doubt that, in the course of years of practical work in the revolutionary movement, my views have developed as a *critical* reaction of Freudian theory.

Psychoanalysis is a *psychology of unconscious* mental life. My theory does not constitute a psychology, but a dialectical materialist science of sexuality ('sex economy'). It studies sexuality inclusive of its operation in the psychological sphere ('dialectical materialist psychology'). A few examples should demonstrate how opposed psychoanalysis and sex-economy are. Freudian cultural theory maintains that sexual enjoyment must for the most part be renounced 'in the interest of civilization', which for Freud explicitly signifies bourgeois civilization. My research in the fields of political sociology and sexual medicine led me to precisely the *opposite* view — that in patriarchal, capitalist society, the sexual satisfaction of the masses stands in the service of their ideological subjection; that the socialist development of society nevertheless overcomes this and changes healthy sexual enjoyment of life into a fundamental progressive factor. In Freud, the family is considered to be unchangeable biologically determined; for sex-economy, in accordance with Engels and Morgan, the family in its present form is regarded as an institution which arose at one time and which will necessarily so alter in form in the future that one will no longer be able to speak of 'family'. In Freud human suffering arises from an instinct, the so-called death instinct. My whole dialectical materialist theory of human instincts started precisely with the refutation of the Freudian death-instinct theory and led to the proof that mental suffering is rooted in concrete in-

stitutions of patriarchal capitalist society. I would emphasise explicitly that Freud and his whole school reject my views and will have nothing to do with me.

17

The revolutionary movement must approach orthodox psychological systems with great caution, since official psychology has, in our present society, principally the function of concealing and diverting attention from the economic basis of class society and the class struggle. One cannot mix 'a little psychology' with 'a little economics'; one cannot take up *any* psychology; one must, in short, know precisely what kind of psychological work is indispensable. It is usually the opponents of psychology in the revolutionary movement who introduce the most conservative psychological views into the socialist movement. In Freud, the instincts, which are considered eternal and immutable, determine the evolution of society. This view is incompatible with a dialectical materialist, revolutionary orientation. The dynamics of human instincts are themselves dependent upon the conditions of existence. Psychology can only be integrated into the revolutionary movement in one single way if it is not to cause harm but to be of use. Marx and Engels demonstrated that the social relations of men and in particular their economic relations, are the basis on which all else is built — morality, law, state—institutions, etc. But that does not explain how this economic basis works itself out in people's instinctual structure. Dialectical materialist psychology therefore has the task of investigating and grasping practically *how the social existence of men influences the fundamental biological instincts of hunger and sexuality, and how in the different classes the concrete living individual develops out of this, and not out of the abstract 'human nature' the bourgeoisie talk about.*

18

Marxist Psychology

Dialectical materialist psychology is *indispensable* in the revolutionary movement. It must absorb from bourgeois science what has been demonstrated as factual, e.g. Freud's proof that the infant is a sexual being and that there exists an unconscious mental life, etc. But one must recognise that *all* bourgeois investigation has to turn aside at a certain point. Psychoanalysis in its present form is *injurious* to the revolutionary movement. By proclaiming psychoanalysis as a scientific aid one impedes the fight for the adoption of revolutionary psychological work in the proletarian movement; for opponents can easily trot out some article from the current psychoanalytic journal and *rightfully* dispose thinking socialists against it. But one will be throwing the baby out with the bath-water and merely *talking*

about psychology if one has not in the course of years of specialised practical work learnt to distinguish what is correct in the psychological knowledge available to us, what can be adopted, and what must be rejected. One must at the same time be active in the working class movement in order to judge accurately *how* this is to be absorbed and *what* must be done. It is precisely the most sterile 'critics' of views of mine (which they have not read), who stand for the most obsolete bourgeois psychology in the revolutionary movement.

19

Like every other social phenomenon, psychoanalysis is bound up with a particular stage of social development; its conditions of existence are connected with a certain level of production conditions. Like Marxism, it is a product of the capitalist era, except that its connection with the economic basis of society is less direct. The indirect relationship, however, can be clearly traced. It is a reaction to the ideological superstructure — the culture and moral conditions of modern man in society. The conditions particular involved are the sexual ones which developed out of ecclesiastic ideologies concerning sex.

20

Church and Morality

Its appearance coincides with other signs of a revolt against bourgeois ideology within the bourgeoisie itself. Bourgeois youth begins to protest against the parental home and creates a 'youth movement' of its own. Because it has no connection with the working class struggle, this movement, soon disintegrates; but not until it has, at least in part, achieved its purpose. Voices are raised in the liberal bourgeois press against the tutelage of the Church. Bourgeois literature adopts an increasingly free position on moral questions. But all these phenomena, some of which accompanied the birth of psychoanalysis and some of which preceded it, die out as soon as matters become really serious. Nobody dares to pursue the ideas to their conclusions or to draw logical consequences; economic interest still has the upper hand, and in fact brings about an alliance between bourgeois liberalism and the churches.

21

The bourgeois revolution of the 19th century swept away almost all feudal methods of production and created its own liberal ideas in opposition to religion and its moral laws. The break with religious morality, however, had already begun, as for instance in France at the time of the French revolution; the bourgeoisie seemed to be carrying within it the seeds of a new morality, opposed to the morality of the Church in general and particularly in the sexual sphere. But just as the bourgeoisie, once its power and the capitalist

economy were established, became reactionary and re-allied itself with the Church because it needed the help of the Church to control the newly-created proletariat, so also it took over in a slightly different form, but fundamentally unchanged, the sexual morality of the Church.

22

Sexual oppression

The bourgeoisie continually increases expenditure on police and army, suppresses the revolutionary press, supports the fascist forces in waging civil war. But apart from naked force, capitalism opposes working people by securing their loyalty through psychological persuasion — school, church and sexual morality. Thus, political reaction goes hand in hand with religious and sexual reaction.

Why does capitalism suppress sexual life? What does it seek to gain in doing so? Sexual oppression is a very important reactionary factor, since:

1. It supports the powerful ideological might of the Church, which is deeply rooted in the mental life of the exploited individual with the aid of sexual anxiety;
2. It sustains the familial and marital order, which depends upon the hindrance of sexuality for its continued existence;
3. By instilling fear of authority in the oppressed, it renders obedient children and subsequently adults to state authority and capitalism;
4. It paralyses the critical faculties of the oppressed, since sexual problems use up much energy which would otherwise be engaged in critical, analytical activity;
5. It paralyses the revolutionary forces in the individual by making people timid and indecisive.

Stultification and spiritual subjection are thus the aim and purpose of the sexual oppression of the masses under capitalism.

23

Neuroses

Neuroses and sexual disturbances. . . plague the working populace to an extent estimated at about 60% among men and 90% among women; they increase material misery and the subjective suffering which mental illnesses give rise to. They are the direct result of the bourgeois sexual upbringing of children, which is prolonged into harmful effects upon adolescence and the

misery of subsequent married life. They grow upon the ground of suppressed sexuality, the diversion of normal, biological sexual needs (by financial interests, upbringing and morality), into perversion and morbid desires. Capitalism earns large profits from the perversions it arouses by the suppression of natural sex-life (luxury industry, film industry, pornography industry). The suppression of sexuality thus has a direct financial meaning for the capitalist. Among the working populace, neuroses and sexual disturbances proliferate as a result of the conflict between natural sex-life and the bourgeois morality passed off on them. Here too, they are an expression of disturbed sexual economy.

Even the development of neuroses is no accidental factor, but a necessary element of the bourgeois sexual order (supported as it is by profit motives) and the consequence, in the last analysis, of bourgeois marital and familial life, into which the non-bourgeois masses are also forced.

Therapeutic institutions (clinics, etc.) can only deal with a diminishing proportion of these people. In sex and marriage guidance centres, we are powerless in the face of all the neuroses and sexual disturbances we meet. The overwhelming majority of doctors are, moreover, not trained in sexual science: no instruction is given in this field at the reactionary medical institutes. The few trained physicians depend materially upon the rich, who are able to pay generously to have their sexual disturbances treated. There has not even been theoretical investigation of the possibility of mass preventive treatment against mental illnesses. The whole of bourgeois science is orientated towards individual therapy. The mass prophylaxis of neuroses, however, requires the transformation of sexual education in its entirety, hence the abolition of those institutions which mass-produce neuroses. These are married life and family upbringing, in which capitalism has such a big stake, since the family is its political-ideology factory.

24

Marriage

The problem of marriage becomes insoluble in bourgeois society because of the intensification of the conflict between the social and economic dependency of the woman on the one hand, which cannot be alleviated under capitalism even by the wisest legislation, and the deadening physiological effect in the long run of sexually unsatisfying relationships, which impels separation on the other hand.

In Soviet Russia, we can see marriage and family fading away with the change of economic life in a socialist direction, and making way for a collectivisation of life, and in particular of the upbringing of child-

ren. We can also see an exemplary reform of marriage, which has gained the approval of many bourgeois, the eradication of every distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' relations in both material and ideological respects, the destruction of the family as the central feature of sexual life and upbringing.

We can see the young, liberated from the restrictions of the family and parental home and drawn increasingly into collective existence, struggling for new sexual forms of life, which however unclear and confused they may be, nevertheless mark a distinct break with the atmosphere of capitalism.

25

The possibility of being alone together is the minimum condition for partners to enjoy a healthy sex-life. The housing conditions of the masses brutalise their sex-life, injure their health through the unhygienic conditions in which sexual intercourse is practised and, moreover, inflict serious damage upon the sexual development of children. Capitalist housing reform does not affect the broad masses, does not take the sexual question into consideration and encounters increasing restrictions upon its efforts as a consequence of the intensification of reaction and of the economic crisis. The plight of the masses in relation to housing is connected to the private character of home ownership and the capitalist nature of the building industry, hence is inseparably linked to private ownership of land and houses.

In contrast to this, we see in proletarian Soviet Russia, where private ownership of land has been abolished, a shortage of housing which still persists it is true, but at the same time a flourishing housing programme aimed at the broad masses: the basis for a future solution to the housing problem.

26

Prostitution

Prostitution. Its foundations lie in mass unemployment among working class women, in the dual morality of petty-bourgeois youth, and in the unsatisfied marital life of broad sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie, which impel young and older men to seek out and buy the commodity (female bodies) in every form on the market of prostitution. It is doubly and inseparably bound up with capitalism: in its material basis (unemployment) and in its ideological superstructure (bourgeois sex-life and dual morality). Capitalism wages war on the prostitute that it produces itself, setting the police onto her, shutting her up in prison which go by the name of hospitals for sexual disease, and putting her morally in the wrong. In spite of years of debate in parliaments and scientific institutes, we have seen no onslaught on the causes of prostitution, but, with the

tremendous increase in unemployment, rather an increase in prostitution.

In Soviet Russia, on the other hand, we see unemployment, the cause of prostitution, already abolished, and the woman increasingly integrated into the process of production as the man's equal and comrade: and we can see the other cause, dual morality, almost gone, giving way to natural, undistorted views. The Soviets are combatting the remains of prostitution by building rehabilitation centres for prostitutes, where they learn to reincorporate themselves in the process of production. We see struggle not against the prostitute herself, but against prostitution, the inheritance of capitalism.

27

Abortion

The question of abortion. . . . Years of debate, thousands of associations, resolutions and congresses have had no effect on the matter. Why? Because capitalism and imperialism depend on the over-population of the proletariat, the source of the industrial reserve army and of the military forces, and upon the sexually inhibitory effect upon the masses of the abortion legislation in reinforcing bourgeois 'decency'. However much the situation has altered through the development of structural unemployment, the abolition of the abortion laws would mean loss of prestige and damage to the ideology of marriage and the family. This unrelenting rigidity is not altered by the failure of the abortion laws to fulfil the function expected of them by capitalism, namely, increasing the birth-rate, nor by the long-evident bankruptcy of bourgeois familial and marital morality.

The abolition of the abortion laws would moreover only make sense if social welfare measures were instituted in their place: free interruption of pregnancy in state clinics, free supply of contraceptive means, propaganda in favour of contraception, and generous maternal and infant allowances.

28

Defective or incomplete erection, called impotence. This is based, excepting those cases which are physical conditions, on an unconscious fear of sexual relationships or dread of the female sexual organs. This fear and dread are most consciously experienced as feelings of inferiority. Very often the ideology of continence is founded on impotence. People think that they do not want sexual relationships for moral reasons, but really it is only because of fear. By making the signs of unconscious fear conscious, the impotence which is being caused may be overcome. Often it is only a matter of a general fear of the other sex conditioned by an education which inhibits the course of sexual arousal by expressing fear.

Impotence occurs when a boy, wanting to have intercourse with a girl, supposes himself faced with a very hard undertaking. This only increases his dread; and you cannot feel fear and sexual excitement at the same time. Usually, a boy goes on to try to prove to the girl and to himself that he is not impotent. He even attempts the act, which of course does not succeed in such conditions. Girls for their part like to mock the boy, which only heightens his anxiety and sense of impotence. If he lets himself be dominated by this feeling, he little by little becomes seriously troubled. Increasing inhibition is very often produced even in healthy young people. But it can easily be overcome if you avoid what must be avoided — if you avoid, that is, trying despite everything to have intercourse just when you really have no desire for it and notice anxiety in yourself. An erection can never be produced at will, because it is an unconscious process and all conscious intent or control can only prove self-defeating.

If you are in such an anxious state that you can't do anything, you can always relax calmly, lying down, and — if the girl isn't so stupid as to mock (sex-education which makes sexuality a matter of pride is responsible for this) — the erection will come easily sooner or later if you are otherwise in good health.

Because of the general social, medical and clerical attitude to masturbation, most young people think that they have become impotent because of masturbating. This is wrong. Untroubled and satisfying masturbation never results in impotence. It is only the feelings of fear and guilt attached to masturbation because of our morality and education which reinforce sexual dread and pave the way for troubles about potency. The best remedy for such troubles is to wait at the start of a sexual encounter until an erection comes without constraint, the situation is right and the anxiety lessened. If a boy has once found pleasure in a relationship, potency will develop increasingly to the extent that the sexual relationship becomes regular. Once more, nothing is worse for increasing slight inhibitions than despair and self-constraint. If there were enough advice centres for young people, if society cared about the problems of youth, there would be no suicides on account of this problem, no unhappiness; initial slight inhibitions would not be developed and extended into a reinforced impotence any longer.

29

Soviet sexual reform

Sexual questions are so urgent an issue among the broad masses that they will not be satisfied with being told that these matters will be taken up after the revolution. The people want concrete answers, not excuses. And it would moreover be a counter-revolution-

ary standpoint to be satisfied with taking a sexual reformist line under capitalism and trusting to the political economists. A third course is the correct one: instituting sexual advice centres, discussion evenings and other meetings on our own initiative, so as to be able to provide what help is possible in a context which at the same time provides for appropriate political education as well as assistance to the individual.

The main priority in working within capitalism remains, however, the *politicization of the sexual question*. It must be put before the masses in a consistently unambiguous form: relentless criticism must be publicly directed against all those sexual reform associations which divert the masses from the essential means of resolving the problem, by depoliticizing it away from the class struggle. The sexual question is an issue of the first order, an issue of contention between the working people and capitalism and cultural reaction: It must not be neglected — for the simple reason that it is a burning issue which, if handled incorrectly, could hold back the revolutionary movement. It must therefore be integrated into the revolutionary movement as a struggle against sexual cultural reaction and liberal sexual reformism: a struggle whose economic roots must be revealed and demystified to show its role in the overthrow of capital.

We must as a matter of principle convince the masses that no help is to be expected from parliament, that they must take control of their fate in this sector *by transforming their consciousness of suffering into revolutionary fighting spirit*, in order to wring concessions from capitalist governments by political struggle and if necessary by extra-parliamentary means. Soviet sexual reform demonstrates that what we are proposing is no utopia, but can be realised if we adopt the path taken in the Soviet Union — *that of revolution*. The widest publicity for soviet sexual reform is therefore essential to the sex-political struggle.

30

We have no choice but to communicate to other working people those findings which we, as ordinary workers ourselves, have so arduously attained, in the same way that we ourselves have adopted, from others' work, findings and suggestions useful in practice. We shall not let ourselves be disturbed in this work by anyone, whoever he may be or however he may appear in the eyes of the credulous. . . . Just let them answer one single human question, such as this: how are women to achieve sexual satisfaction without getting pregnant every time? How do they intend the young to occupy their leisure-time? How will work be rendered enjoyable and spare time satisfying for the mass of workers? How will it be possible to build homes for millions of people so that the children are not wrecked by the grown ups' conflicts, and so that couples don't destroy each other with their simultaneous love and hatred: to arrange that boys and girls don't hang about street corners in boredom and frustration?

31

There is under capitalism a total lack of the conditions necessary to solve these problems. The building of lodgings is in the hands of speculators who have an interest in the misery of the masses. Only the socialization of the building enterprises and the transformation of private property into communally-held property – as in the Soviet Union – can solve the problem. The precondition, then, is the expropriation of private property and the suppression of land ownership. But only a social revolution will bring this about. Another precondition for a regulated and fulfilling sexual life is to spread knowledge of the best contraceptive techniques among young people as soon as they want to start. But political reaction is as strong and as terroristic in this as it is in all other areas of importance to the bourgeoisie. The possibility of terminating an unwanted pregnancy in public clinics is another basic precondition. Young people who are hungry and wretched, cut off from any kind of culture, hanging around the streets and bars, are in no wise capable of having a regulated or satisfying sexual life, because they are either left in sexual confusion, which is not their fault but that of society, or they are sexually disturbed. Since bourgeois sexual repression in the family and at school is the cause of sexual disturbances, it is necessary to transform the whole of economic and social existence, so that women can free themselves materially and be independent of the power of men, and so that parents lose their oppressive authority over children. Another precondition is a free public education for children and a radical change in attitudes towards infantile sexuality.

32

Since the communist youth movement is working on the clear political line of social revolution, it should also be called on to lead youth in the area of sexuality. And working class youth would recognise this direction if the movement addressed itself to them in an adequate way about this urgent and difficult problem – that is, resolutely and straightforwardly – so that they would feel that the movement knew their needs and upheld their cause.

33

We know of three kinds of officials in the proletarian youth movements: first, the one who leads no sexual life at all and has plunged all his energies into the work of the party; secondly, the one who leads a discreet sexual life with some comrade or other and who also devotes his energies to the party, and lastly, the third, who is constantly in conflict, to a greater or lesser extent, between his duties to the party and his love relationships. If we take more than a cursory glance at these comrades and review their careers as a whole, we will find that the best official, that is, the one who not only does his work most solidly, but also has the most perseverance and stays in the movement, is the one who has an ordered love-life. Sexuality has ceased to be a problem for him. The first type is also a good official,

but experience shows that this is for a limited period only. This is because at first he attempts to stifle his personal difficulties in work, only to collapse later in some way or other or to disappear somehow from the movement. It clearly emerges from medical and political experience, that the cause of this breakdown is not merely or essentially overwork, as is generally thought, but sexual troubles, the difficulties of 'private life', which together with the large demands made by the party have made the official concerned incapable of continuing the struggle. Total absence of a sexual life cannot be tolerated without eventual serious troubles. We adopt this type of view here not only in the interests of health but in the interests of revolutionary work. Constant instability of party officials harms this. We have an interest in the capacity for work of each party activist lasting as long as possible, and one of the most important conditions is a reasonably regulated sexual life. Some people believe in gaining strength by entirely eliminating any sexual activity. This is an error. Actually, when you restrain your sexual life too much, the intensity of work suffers; but the time lost on 'private life' is more than made up for by the vigour with which you can work if you have a reasonably satisfying sex-life – you work faster and better.

34

Deformations

The sexual deformations that each of us bears inside ourselves as a consequence of sexual repression, and which are connected with repressed unconscious attitudes, mean that we are not completely our own masters in our sexual lives. And there are the deepest reasons for our failure to openly and consistently attack this problem: not one person among us, even the most lucid, dares to pronounce on sexual liberation along with our usual propaganda. We must also begin to understand why so many communists begin to smile strangely and pull a face whenever the subject of sex comes up. We must end this in a decisive manner, in spite of the great difficulties we will have in overcoming our own inhibitions.

35

Concrete preparations must ensure that the idea of seizing power precedes the actual seizure of power by the workers in the factories. The same applies to every youth organisation, every sports organisation, every military regiment. This and only this is the 'awakening of class consciousness'. The leadership of the revolutionary party has and can have no other duty than to help this first step of revolutionary social democracy towards the seizure of power in attaining even greater lucidity, to guide preparations and assist in widening

knowledge. When drawn into concrete work in this way, every worker will feel himself the real master of the factory and no longer think of the employer as paying his wages, but as exploiting his labour power. . . . Precisely the same principle of coming to practical awareness applies to the youth of all sections of the populace. Where the young are in the factories, they will take part in concrete trade union work. Where they are not in the factories, they will concern themselves with the arrangement of their personal lives, the solution of the conflicts engendered by their parents, the question of sexual partners, the problem of getting somewhere to live. In this way, they will not merely conceive new forms of social life from their own experience, but go on to practice and finally fight for them; it will moreover be impossible to restrain them. . .

36

Sexual Revolution

The sexual revolution in the Soviet Union started with the dissolution of the family. The family disintegrated radically, in all strata of the population: sooner here, later there. This process was painful and chaotic: it caused terror and confusion.

37

In Trotsky's *'Everyday Questions'*, we find ample material concerning the disintegration of the family during the year 1919/1920. The following facts were noted:

The family, including the proletarian family, began to 'disintegrate'. The fact was not being denied, and was interpreted in diverse ways: some were 'disquieted', others reserved, still others did not know what to make of it. All agreed that they were confronted with 'some major, very chaotic process which might soon take on a tragic form' and which 'did not as yet disclose its possibilities of a new, higher form of family order.'

38

The significance ascribed to the sexual revolution by the social revolution is evidenced by the fact that Lenin, as early as December 19-20, 1917, issued two relevant decrees. One was 'About the dissolution of marriage': true its content was not as unequivocal as its title. The other was, 'About civil marriage, children and the registration of marriage.' Both laws deprived the husband of his prerogatives of domination in the family, gave the woman the complete right to economic and sexual self-determination, and declared it to be a matter of course that the woman could freely determine her name, domicile and citizenship. Of course, these laws did in themselves nothing but guarantee externally free development to a process which was still to come. It was a matter of course that the re-

volutionary law intended the abolition of patriarchal power. Depriving the ruling class of power meant at the same time eliminating the power of the father over the members of the family, and of the representative of the state *within* the compulsive family as the structure-forming cell of class society.

39

Divorce was made very easy. A sexual relationship which was considered a 'marriage' could be as easily dissolved as it had been established. The only criterion was mutual agreement among the partners. No one could force another person into a relationship; there was only the free determination of the partners. Under these circumstances, 'grounds for divorce' became meaningless. When a partner wanted to relinquish a sexual companionship he did not have to give reasons. Marriage and divorce became purely private matters.

40

Birth Control

In the field of birth control, there was a remarkable clarity of concepts from the very beginning. The basic concepts were as follows: As long as a society is not willing or able to take care of the children, it has no right to demand of the mother that they bear children against their will or in spite of serious economic want. For this reason, all women, without exception, had the right to interrupt a pregnancy during the first three months. The abortions were to take place in public obstetric hospitals. Only clandestine illicit abortions were to be punished. By this measure it was hoped that illegal abortion would come out into the open and would be taken out of the hands of the quacks. In the cities, this was largely successful; out in the country, women were less apt to give up their old ways. This showed again that abortion is not just a legal problem but has a great deal to do with the sexual anxiety of women. The secrecy and the embarrassment with which sexuality has been connected for thousands of years cause a woman from among the workers or peasants to go to a quack rather than to a hospital.

There was never any thought of making abortion a lasting social institution; the Soviets were clear in their own minds from the very beginning that the legalization of abortion was only one of the means of fighting quackery. The main goal was that of the *prevention of abortion* through thorough enlightenment about the use of contraceptives.

The stigma of the unwed mother soon disappeared. The increasing participation of the woman in the process of production gave her a material independence and security which not only facilitated childbearing to her but made it seem more desirable. The woman

ceased working for two months previous to delivery and two months afterwards, while their pay continued. The factories and the farm collectives established nurseries with trained nurses who could take care of the children while the mothers were at work. If one saw these institutions for child care, one could no longer doubt the enormous progress in social hygiene. The women were relieved of heavy work in the early months of pregnancy. The time they took off for nursing was paid. The budget for maternal and infant care rose from year to year, almost in geometrical progression.

41

Homosexuality

Soviet sexual legislation had simply scrapped the old Tsarist homosexuality paragraph which penalized homosexuality with long-term imprisonment. The presentation of homosexuality in the great *Soviet Encyclopedia* was based on Magnus Hirschfeld and partly on Freud. The reason given for the abolition of the homosexuality paragraph was that the problem of homosexuality was exclusively a scientific one and that, consequently, homosexuals should not be punished. It was necessary, it was said, to take down the walls which separated homosexuals from the rest of society. This achievement of the Soviet government gave the sex-political movement in Western Europe and America a great impetus. It was, indeed, not just a propagandistic measure, but was based on the fact that homosexuality, whether it is considered congenital or acquired, is an activity which does nobody any harm. This was also the general feeling among the population. People in general were very tolerant in sexual matters, even though, as one reporter states, homosexuals and lesbians were occasionally 'made fun of in a kindly way.'

42

Economico-politically, the Russian revolution was guided entirely and consciously by Marxist theory of economics and politics. All economic processes were seen in the light of the theory of historical materialism. But as far as the cultural revolution was concerned — to say nothing of its core, the sexual revolution — neither Marx nor Engels has provided any investigations which could have guided the leaders of the revolution. Lenin himself, in criticizing a book by Ruth Fischer stressed the fact that the sexual revolution, like the sexual process in general, was not at all understood from the standpoint of dialectic materialism, and that its mastery would require a tremendous experience. He thought that if anybody would comprehend this problem in its totality and real significance, he would do the greatest service to the revolution. As we have

seen, the functionaries were aware of the fact that here was a *new* field for investigation. Trotsky also pointed out again and again how new and how little understood was the field of cultural and sexual revolution.

43

We must learn from the Russian revolution that the economic revolution, the social ownership of the social means of production and the political establishment of social democracy (dictatorship of the proletariat) goes automatically hand-in-hand with a revolution in attitudes towards sexuality and in sexual relationships. Like the economic and political revolution, the sexual revolution must also be consciously comprehended and guided in a *forward* direction.

44

The discussions concerning the 'new regulation of personal and cultural life' among the general population lasted for years. They showed an activity and an enthusiasm which only people can have who have just thrown off heavy chains and have clearly recognised that they have to start their lives all over again. These discussions of the 'sexual question' started at the beginning of the revolution, increased more and more, and finally died down.

45

Reaction

Around 1923, a certain development became more apparent which was aimed *against* the revolutionary changes in personal and cultural life; it was not until the years between 1933 and 1935 that it also became tangible in regressive legislative measures. This process constitutes an inhibition of the sexual and cultural revolution in the Soviet Union.

46

We hear and read that in the Soviet Union the compulsive family is again being cherished and supported. The regulation of marriage as set down in 1918 is being more or less abolished. In our fight against the compulsive marriage laws, we had always pointed to the Soviet laws. The revolution had confirmed Marx's statement that the social revolution 'puts an end to compulsive marriage'. Now, reactionary politics triumph: 'You see, your theories are nonsense. Even the Soviet Union relinquishes the false doctrine of the destruction of the authoritarian family. The compulsive family is and remains the basis of compulsive society and of the state.'

Responsibility for the education of the children is again turned over to the parents. In our pedagogical and cultural work we used to point to the fact that in the Soviet Union the parents were deprived of their

power over the children and that society as a whole took over the task of caring for their education. The collectivization of education seemed a fundamental process in a Socialist Society. Every progressive worker, every clear-thinking mother realised and affirmed this tendency in Sovietism. We fought the possessive tendencies and the misuse of power on the part of the mothers and pointed out to them that the children were not being 'taken away' from them but that the education of the children by society relieved them of burdens and cares. This they understood. Now the political reaction point out: 'You see, even in the Soviet Union they have given up this nonsense and are reinstating the natural, God-given power of the parents over the children.'

47

Here we should mention the attempts of the Soviet government in the first years after the revolution to give children full freedom to criticize their parents. This was a measure which at first was not at all understood in Western European countries, although it was known in the United States. Many children called their parents by their first names. That is, school as well as parental home began to change their attitude in the sense of producing a self-regulating structure in the children. This tendency, which might be illustrated by many more examples, was opposed by another one which began more and more to gain the upper hand. Recently, the latter triumphed. This meant another regression to patriarchal forms of upbringing. Work on the complicated problems of collective upbringing seemed to cease. Family upbringing became again the rule. There was a corresponding change in the type of political education in the schools.

48

When the daily press continues to thunder against abortion; when this propaganda is accompanied by the glorification of festive marriage ceremonies; when the sanctity of marital duty is emphasised and mothers of triplets and quadruplets receive special prizes; when articles are written about women who never resorted to abortion; when an underpaid school teacher, mother of four children, receives public praise because she did

not refuse having a fifth child, 'in spite of the difficulties of feeding them all' — then, writes Fischer, one thinks of Mussolini. Girls who resist sexual temptation are no longer considered 'conservative' or ever 'counter-revolutionary'. *"The basis of the family should be love and not the satisfaction of physical needs."*

These few excerpts show that the sexual ideology of the leading groups in the Soviet Union is no longer any different from the ideology of the leading groups in an any conservative country. There is, undoubtedly, a regression to life-negating sexual moralism.

The official ideology of the Soviet Union had its effect also in Western Europe. The Humanite of 31 October, 1935 wrote the following:

"Save the family! Help us in our great inquiry in the interest of the right to love. It is a well-known fact that the birth rate in France is decreasing at an alarming rate. . . The Communists are confronted by a very grave situation. The country which they are to revolutionize, the French world, runs the danger of being crippled and depopulated. The maliciousness of a dying capitalism, its immorality, the egoism it creates, the misery, the clandestine abortions which it provokes, destroy the family. The Communists want to fight in the defence of the French family. They have definitely broken with the petit-bourgeois, individualistic and anarchic tradition which makes an ideal of sterilization. They want to take over a strong country and a fertile race. The USSR points the way. But it is necessary immediately to take active measures to save the race. . . An inquiry of the means for saving the French family by giving motherhood and childhood, by giving families with many children the place and the advantages which they must have in the country. Write to us, youths, fathers and mothers. . . P. Vaillant-Courtrier."

This is how a Communist thinks who vies with the National Socialists in the race theory and the advocacy of the family with many children. Such an article in a Socialist organ is catastrophic. The competition is hopeless: the Fascists are ever so much better at this business.

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