THE BEST OF WILHELM REICH

(Extracts from his writings)

1

Psychic health depends upon orgastic potency, this is, on the capacity for surrender in the acme of sexual excitation in the natural sexual act. Its basis is the unneurotic character attitude of capacity for love. Mental illness is a result of a disturbance in the natural capacity for love. In the case of orgastic 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 whithin 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 humancharacter 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 (orgastic) 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 enquiries 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 preconscious, 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 an 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 poletarian'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 proceded 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 con flict 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

Frued 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 psychoanalystic 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 of renounced 'in the interest of civilization', which for Freud explicity 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 imcompatible 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 opposses 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 facilities 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 disurbances 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 wh whole of bourgeois science is orientated towards individual theraphy. 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 collectiveisation 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 th 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 unhygenic conditions in which sexual intercourse is practised and, moreover, inflict serious damage upon the sexual dev development of children. Capitalist housing reform do 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 lan 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-revolutionary 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 sin 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 stimultaneous love and hatred: to arrange that boys and girls don't hang about street corners in boredom and frustration? . . . . . .

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-revolutionary 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.

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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 Soviety 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 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 wrok 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 thatthis 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 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 ourself 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 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 revolutionary 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 fild 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 th 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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