SILENT RADIO ◀1

archist critique of existing society can trace the roots of the problems we all face, and propose just and workable solutions: Opponents of the nuclear arms policy of the superpowers, who understand that bombs cannot solve the political problems that the superpowers have themselves created. Environmentalists, who realize that government and industry work in collusion to foist the consequences of their stupidity and greed on innocent people. Feminists, who recognize that the power structure is and will remain fundamentally oppressive to women, in spite of the occasional election of a woman mayor or a congressman who halfheartedly supports the ERA in exchange for a few votes.

HERE'S WHERE WE COME IN

All people, of whatever class, race, gender, or religious or political persuasion, are oppressed in authoritarian society; all are bullied or bribed into placing the welfare of the state before their own. But circumstances bring certain issues to the fore in certain times, and the repression of homosexual feeling, like the oppression of women and ethnic minorities, is one such critical issue in our own time. We think it is critical not just for gay people but for everyone. It is critical because it is basic to the way the family and schools train children in obedience to authority; because the fear of homosexual desire is used to terrorize and divide the public; because authority attempts to compartmentalize our erotic drives and use them to give still more power to the powerful.

The very use of the term "homosexual" is an example: It implies limitations in love and sex rather than the broad range of possibilities gay people experience in their own lives. Theories of the "origins" of homosexuality, which range from the merely preposterous to the downright vicious, emphasize our "difference" from other people, and treat us as a problem to be solved. "Enlightened" psychological theories locate the genesis of homosexuality in childhood trauma or an "unbalanced" family structure--in other words, in insufficient conformity; recently-revived genetic theories--the same kind the Nazis favored--claim, on incredibly paltry evidence, that we're physically different, right down to our chromosomes. All mainstream theories ignore the most important and obvious fact: that nothing about us requires explanation--"homosexuality" is a social category, and "homosexuals" a term very loosely applied to a large part of the population for no other purpose than to isolate, estrange, and dominate people--not just gay people, but everyone who has been trained to fear homosexual feeling.

Whether the objective of public policy is to treat gay people as ill rather than criminal, or in some vague way "special" rather than ill, the ultimate aim is always to obscure the issue: to make gay people more completely and unquestionably the other; to make of gay love and sex a problem confined to one segment of the population rather than a potentiality universal in human personality; to find new and more complex ways to remove the possibility of free, unrestricted sexual pleasure and expression from our lives. In no way do we suggest that this is a conscious conspiracy; it is simply a necessity for authority, which requires control not just over outward forms of behavior, but over people's identity and feelings towards each other.

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This is how authority operates in the liberal--as opposed to overtly repressive--state: Through its control over the dissemination of ideas, it forces individual and collective personality into the molds that suit its ends. The ideas authority presents may appear benign and even progressive, but their ultimate function is to oppress and divide. Our common humanity is hacked up into a host of constituencies; terms such as "homosexual" are used to divide us into supposed "special interest" groups, to turn contingencies of experience into categories of being. Equally obnoxious are terms like "the disadvantaged" and "the elderly": people manifestly exactly like everyone else--since we are all more or less old and more or less disadvantaged--except for the ways in which authority discriminates between and against us. Both conservative and liberal politics categorize certain social problems as "women's issues"--as though the day-to-day concerns of the majority of the human race were somehow the province of a special interest. Authority makes the rules that impose special hardships on people--those that operate with the force of law and those that operate through the silent radio--and then compounds the injury by setting them apart from others. Whether it is a matter of race, economic class, gender, or love life, the attempt is to make us identify ourselves--our whole way of being--with the place authority finds for us.

GAY POLITICS OR GAY LIBERATION?

Since the mechanisms of repression in our society include efforts to make authority appear benevolent, it requires both vigilance and a hard look at our political and economic insitutions not to fall into the trap. The choice is between alternatives already well established in the minds of most gay people: gay politics or gay liberation.

We feel that by purporting to represent a "special" group with "special" interests, gay politics furthers the idea that gay people are a separate population, rather than people who, for whatever reason, defy convention and express their homosexual feeling openly. Just as importantly, it misses the opportunity to study, understand, and act on the underlying causes of oppression of all kinds and make common cause with other groups of people who have been isolated and alienated by authority.

Thus we differ from gay politics on very basic issues of both theory and practice:

•We think that laws against homosexual behavior, or against the employment of gay people as teachers, for example, show not that bad laws can be made, but that laws are bad; and that laws made to "protect" us are equally bad. It is not our business to plead with the state to grant us "rights." It may appear reasonable

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RESOURCES

anarchism

theory

*abc of anarchism alexander berkman freedom press 106pp
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anarchism: from theory to practice daniel guerin monthly review press 166pp
anarchism george woodcock new american library 504pp
□about anarchism nicholas walter freedom press 32pp (out of print)

history

*anarchist collectives sam dolgoff black rose 195pp
the unknown revolution voline black rose
history of the makhnovist movement 1918-21 peter arshinov black and red 284pp
*collectives in the spanish revolution gaston leval freedom press 368pp
with the peasants of aragon augustin souchy bauer soil of liberty press

classics

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*anarchism and other essays emma goldman dover
*kropotkin's revolutionary pamphlets peter kropotkin dover 307pp
*god and the state michael bakunin dover 86pp
caleb williams william godwin ww norton 351pp (a novel)

anthologies

reinventing anarchy ehrlich, ehrlich, deLeon, Morris, eds. routledge & kegan paul
the anarchist reader george woodcock, ed. humanities press
situationist international anthology ken knabb bureau of public secrets 403pp

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□*anarchism and formal organizations howard ehrlich research group one 24pp (op)
anarchism and the national liberation struggle bratach dubh
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