

bring up the matter with Stalin, though without success. On publishing his defection from the "Popular Front" line he was attacked by French and Czechoslovak party stalwarts (who had previously lauded him to the skies) as a "poor bugger" who had mixed up "revolution and pederasty."

As early as the 1920s leaders of Western Communist parties began to float the idea that the public discussion of homosexuality, and the seeming increase in homosexual activity, resulted from the decadence of capitalism in its death throes. Homosexuality was to disappear in the healthy new society of the future. These negative attitudes also had their parallels in cultural criticism. In 1930 in the American Communist Party journal *New Masses*, Herbert Gold and others launched a campaign against "effete, fairy literature." Thornton Wilder, a principal target of the attacks, was accused of propagating a "pastel, pastiche, dilettante religion, . . . a daydream of homosexual figures in graceful gowns moving among the lilies."

After the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933, Marxist proponents of the decadence theory added a new layer to these attacks in their myth of "fascist perversion," some purported affinity between homosexuality and National Socialism. Leftist propaganda of this type may have played a part in Hitler's decision to liquidate his homosexual henchman Ernst Röhm, thereby distancing himself from the accusation. In June 1934, for example, the exiled Marxian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich opined: "The more clearly developed the natural heterosexual inclinations of the juvenile are, the more open he will be to revolutionary idea; the stronger the homosexual tendency within him . . . the more easily he will be drawn to the right." More generally, the heterosexuality that is so salient in the Marxist tradition may be augmented by the felt link between production and reproduction. Most Marxists are, of course, heterosexual and, in keeping with the tendency of true-believer groups to exalt all their

shared traits, subject to an unthinking bias.

Despite Gide's experience, the temptations and pleasures of political pilgrimage continued as seductive as before. Wide-eyed delegations visited the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, as often as not being taken on excursions to Potemkin villages and being regaled with highly romanticized accounts of the happiness of the masses under "actually existing socialism." After Castro's rude suppression of homosexuals in Cuba, the favorite destination of these pilgrims, who included some gay men and lesbians, shifted in the 1980s to Nicaragua, yet even there the authorities would not recognize a gay organization. Gay visits to Third World Socialist countries tend to be emotionally tinged with sympathy for nonwhite peoples as an oppressed world proletariat, mirroring the gay sense of oppression at home, while freighted with a certain amount of guilt over sexual tourism—the descent of well-heeled western gay men on the impoverished fleshpots of the tropics. Somehow sympathetic visits to struggling Third World countries are held to atone for this perceived exploitation—even as it continues to occur.

Communist parties outside the Soviet bloc have generally been unsympathetic to homosexual participation in their activities and indifferent to gay issues. The only significant exception seems to be the independent-minded Italian Communist Party, the promoter of "Euro-Communism," which has provided material assistance to gay groups and published sensitive discussions in party periodicals. In most western countries it has been Trotskyists, with their claustrophobic and faction-ridden experience of marginality, who have provided the few organizational havens open to gay people in the world Communist movement.

*Contributions of Marxism.* Despite all these negative considerations, the contribution of Marxism to the movement for gay rights and to the interpreta-