

# APPEAL

TO THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL  
CONGRESS FOR SEXUAL REFORM FOR  
THE BENEFIT OF AN OPPRESSED  
VARIETY OF HUMAN BEING  
(COPENHAGEN 1928) —KURT HILLER



GAY LIBERATION SERIES

WITH DISCUSSION    A RED BUTTERFLY PUBLICATION

# APPEAL

to the Second International Congress For Sexual Reform, for the benefit of an oppressed variety of human being (Copenhagen 1928)

Honorable Mr. President, distinguished members of the Congress!

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to bring an expression of my thoughts before you, if indirectly. (1) I would have presented them myself in your midst, if my economic situation hadn't prevented undertaking the journey to Copenhagen.

My task is: to get up on the international Forum which you have established, in order to call out to the world: A strange, but fully worthy, harmless, guiltless variety of human being has existed among all peoples and continues to today. We live now as we lived in the darkest middle-ages: senselessly and horribly persecuted by a large part of the people, under the leadership of their lawmakers, governments, and judges. The thinking world, individuals of all nations who are explorers and guides for the intellect, stand up against this barbarism and demand in the name of humanity: Halt!

The variety about which I speak is that minority of humans who know their love-inclinations not towards a representative of the opposite, but rather towards a representative of the same sex: these are the so-called homosexuals, Urnings, or inverts.

They are outlawed because, it is said, their feelings and acts are "contrary to Nature". But their feelings and acts are rooted in their predisposition, which is a component of the character that was assigned to them by Nature. If the histories of all primitive and all civilised peoples indicate the existence of such a minority in all ages, then this fact means that we have to get down and try to understand this nature as perfectly natural. A phenomenon of Nature, about which the majority is uncomprehending or uneasy, does not cease on this account to be a phenomenon of Nature.

Homosexual love is not a mockery of Nature, but rather a play of Nature. And anyone who alleges to the contrary that, "love should serve the preservation of the species, that homosexual or heterosexual energy is misspent on ends other than propagation", he doesn't consider in what superabundance millionfold and billionfold Nature in all her riches wastes semen. As Nietzsche expressed it in "Morgenrote", "Procreation is a frequently occurring accidental result of one way of satisfying the sexual impulses", it is not the goal of it, not the necessary result of it". The theory according to which propagation is the goal of sexuality, is directly unmasked as hasty, simplistic and false through the phenomenon of homosexual love. The laws of Nature, in contrast to the laws of Reason, generally do not permit themselves to be transgressed. The assertion that a definite phenomenon in Nature could be "contrary to Nature" is either complete nonsense, which it is, or nothing. Nevertheless,

this nonsensical assertion has been dragging itself along for many hundreds of years through literature and legislation, and even very famous enlighteners have come out with this nonsense.

Even in recent times, a world-known spokesman of the European left, Henri Barbusse, exhibited his wisdom and brain power most unfavorably as he (in the Paris Journal, "Les Marges" of 15 March 1926) answered, in response to a circular inquiry on homosexuality: "this diversion of a natural instinct is, like all other perversions, a sign of the deep social and ethical decay of a certain sector of present society. At all times the signs of decay have shown up in over-refinement and anomalies in the life-aspects of sensuality, sensibility, and emotion". One must retort to Mr. Barbusse that this alleged "over-refinement", about which he speaks, uncritically parroting a popular misconception, has at all times shown up just as much in times of the ascent of a race as in times of decline. For example, Greece, in its youth and its prime, allowed the love between man and boy without trying to imagine it away. The same was true in the brilliant time of Islamic culture, and in the epoch of Michelangelo.

This "Marxist" is being ridiculous when he ties in the homosexuality of the present with the class struggle, so as to point to it as a sign of the "ethical decay" of "a certain sector", namely the bourgeois sector, of society. As though homosexual love among proletarians of all types, among workers, peasants, employees, little people in all occupational branches, could not be found in the same measure as among the owners! The experience of sexologists and psychotherapists teaches the contrary. Nature, when she creates her wonderful variety among humans, doesn't stop before social classes. It is true that the proletariat as a rule has less time and means than the owning class to devote to the joys of sexual pleasure, even to the sublimated forms of eroticism; and this is, among many grounds, a ground which should lead the struggler for human happiness towards socialism... or ought to lead. But this is just as true for the broad mass of proletarians considered heterosexual as for their homosexual minority.

One hears openly of the homosexuality of the modest little people much less often than of that in the luxury circle of the big bourgeoisie, but it would be extremely superficial to derive on this basis that it is some kind of monopoly of the bourgeoisie. One must realise, rather, that the outlawing of homosexual eros hits the homosexual proletarian even harder than the homosexual capitalist: because the capitalist, as a result of all the opportunities and aids at his disposal, can escape more easily.

In any case, the homosexually predisposed worker can offer little thanks to Mr. Barbusse, when he writes about the alleged "satisfaction" with which some authors place their "delicate talent" in the service of the homosexual question, "while our old world convulses into fearful economic and social crises".

With the uttermost venom, Mr. Barbusse gives "no respect to this decadent intellectual phalanx" and is able "to raise only the contempt which the healthy and young popular force feels towards the representatives of this morbid and artificial doctrine".

The "fearful economic and social crises", into which the world "convulses", evidently hinder Mr. Barbusse from letting go of a prejudice which he shares with the most backward people of all nations. The Emperor Napoleon and his Chancellor Cambaceres, when they gave freedom for homosexual acts in their penal code, were more revolutionary four generations ago than this revolutionary of today. Barbusse sings the same moral tune on this matter, about which he understands nothing, as the most reactionary German Directors of the Ministry, when their "theme" is to tighten bills on matters, about which they likewise understand nothing. "Contempt", "healthy popular force", and "morbid doctrine" -- we've already heard from the conservative clerical jurists out of Wilhelm's time.

At this moment, when Soviet Russia has removed homosexual acts (as such) from being subject to penalty (2); when fascism is on the rise, appearing in Italy for the first time in generations; when in Germany and several other lands Reaction and Progress are violently contending around the homosexual problem; here comes Comrade Barbusse, member of the Third International. Unburdened with any special knowledge, he delivers a mucky, agitational tirade against an already sufficiently agitated against species of human being. He unscrupulously attacks from the rear the fighters for a good, if by its nature unpopular, cause for freedom. I'm sorry that I find it necessary to speak such gross truth to a master whose poetical and political-philosophical work I value so much; but the higher someone stands, who disseminates conservative and false theories, the more sharply must we rebut him: for the more dangerous they are.

It is not true that homosexuality is a "decay" symptom or something sick. Men of blossoming physical health, of undoubted psychic intactness, and of great intellectual strength have been bearers of this predisposition -- just as often as the weak, unstable, and inferior have been its bearers. There are homosexuals of little worth, average worth, and of great worth -- exactly as there are heterosexuals of little worth, average worth, and of great worth. To belong, not to the rule, to the "norm", but rather to the exception, to the minority, to a variety, is neither a degenerative nor a pathological symptom. Also having red hair is neither decadent nor sick. If it is true that the percentages of the psychically weak, the eccentric, the unbalanced, the hypersensitive and the overly excitable are higher among homosexuals than they are among persons inclined in the usual direction, then one must place the blame not on the disposition, but rather on the plight of these people. One who lives constantly under the weight of conceptions and laws that stamp his particular bent as inferior, must be of an

unusually robust nature to retain his full worth in every respect. If the fearful weight of contempt and persecution which presses on them were to be removed from homosexuals, so in the same degree would any nervous disorders vanish. And the creative worth of their beings, especially the pedagogical worth, of which Plato wrote, would be attained. The need is for homosexuals to build in the general social culture, to assign a place for homosexuality in society, out of which they can be productive. Indeed, they have their own fertility. Greece, above all Sparta, knew about this and understood from this knowledge how to draw the practical conclusions.

But before one can assign homosexuality this positive and sublime role in the state, which responds to the particular bent and at the same time serves the state, it is first necessary to complete the negative, libertarian and humanitarian actions, which relate to the grossest matters: that the public outlawry, under which this variety suffers, be abolished in all lands. Most certainly it is not only a matter of the penal code, but the penal code must be dealt with first.

England (one remembers the tragedy of Oscar Wilde), the United States together with Argentina and Chile, Germany and Austria, several Scandinavian, East- and Balkanlands, and also the German Canton of Switzerland still punish homosexual acts which have been undertaken between completely competent adults with an understanding of free mutual consent (only the homosexual women are most privileged) (3). Indeed, these countries threaten the prospect of long-term jail penalties. The German penal code of 1925 provides penalties as great as ten years in the penitentiary.

It is not society in these lands which profits thereby, but rather the tribe of blackmailers. Thousands of valuable existences are shattered. France -- despite Mr. Barbusse -- and with France the great majority of the Latin countries no longer know the punishment; also the Islamic lands, also China and Japan do not know it; also Soviet Russia, as already mentioned, has done away with it. (true in 1928, but not for long. R.B.)

It is clear that socially harmful conduct in the sphere of homosexual love should remain punishable to the same degree as socially harmful conduct in the sphere of heterosexual love; that the free sexual self-determination of adults and the inexperience of sexually immature youth should be protected through criminal codes, that also the misuse of economic or official dependence for lascivious ends must be forbidden, as well as causing offense in public streets and places -- with complete parity between heterosexual and homosexual acts. Anyone who asserts that the liberation of homosexuals would be a Carte Blanche for unrestrained and dangerous debauchery, or that responding to the interests of the abnormal would neglect the interests of society.

The interests of society stand foremost; but I question whether the interests of society demand that human beings, merely because their taste in love differs from that of the majority, and through whose acts no one is harmed, should be thrown in prison, dishonored, and destroyed socially. I question whether the interest of society is served when a law with heavy penalties forces a minority of its members to a lifetime of sexual abstinence or masturbation (they put life-term convicts in this situation) -- a minority, mark well, which, in case it follows its own nature, causes not the slightest harm. That boy-rape and homosexual sex-murder should be protected, is definitely not the point of this speech!

Prudishness, in connection with distortions, contradictory notions about what forms homosexual love-making takes, prevents a general public discussion about the problem -- especially in the lands most concerned. And even more than prudishness: the dullness, the personal lack of interest in the masses and among intellectuals. One must have a sense of justice and nobility in rich measure to take on the injustice of a persecuted minority to which one does not belong. But fortunately, there is still a significant number of human beings who are distinguished through such fairness. These people comprehend that an age, in which concern for the national minorities is so extraordinarily keen and active, must pull together to protect a minority which, to be sure, has no nationality, but which can be found in all countries, and which is so worthy of protection, as there is no country in the world in which they are the majority and with which they, like the national minorities, could identify. The international minority rights, slowly taking shape, should take under protection not only the national, the racial, and the religious, but also the psycho-biological, the sexual minorities, so far as they are harmless; and if the Second International Congress for Sexual Reform would speak out for these ideas, this would be a courageous action for ethical reason.

by Kurt Hiller

translated from the German by  
The Red Butterfly

from: Ratioaktiv by Kurt Hiller  
Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1966,  
pp. 72 - 77.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. The speech was read by the President of the Congress, Magnus Hirschfeld.
2. The old Tsarist anti-homosexual laws were struck off the books by Lenin in 1917. However, coinciding with the general retrograde course of Soviet politics, the laws were put back in effect in 1934 by Stalin!

3. We can accept this as true only within the narrow, if acute, area of penal law. Female homosexuals, of course, are oppressed also as women.

(In later footnotes (1966) to the 1928 speech, included in Ratioaktiv, Mr. Hiller adds a number of interesting observations on subsequent developments, including the Soviet experience. Of special interest are his comments on Israel. Islamic lands, as pointed out in the speech, do not penalise homosexual acts. During the Mandate period, orthodox Jews forced in anti-homosexual legislation, and these laws are still on the books in Israel today. Liberals and socialists in the Israel government recently attempted to change these laws, but their efforts were "wrecked" by the "stubbornness of the orthodox oxen who unfortunately ruled with them". (Mr. Hiller's words are in quotes.)

Mr. Hiller concludes his comments on Israel's anti-homosexual policies: "That representatives of an ethnic minority that has been horribly persecuted should themselves persecute an equally harmless and guiltless biological minority -- what sentiment could arise in a thinking person other than boundless contempt!"

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The woodcut used for the front cover is from the novel in woodcuts, God's Man, by Lynd Ward.

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#### DISCUSSION

We think Kurt Hiller's speech of 1928 stands up amazingly well today, 42 years after it was delivered. The basic issues -- the naturalness of homosexuality, the senselessness of its persecution, the ethical and creative perspective -- are fully grasped and profoundly expressed. In addition, we feel its historical interest justifies making it available in English to the Gay Liberation movement.

We have a few minor differences in interpretation with the 1928 speech. For one, we accept the concept, developed by Kinsey and his associates, that human sexual behavior falls on a continuum between those who exhibit exclusively heterosexual, and those who exhibit exclusively homosexual behavior. Most so-called "homosexuals" are not exclusively or even predominantly homosexual, in terms of life-time sexual behavior. Even using the terms "homosexual" and "heterosexual" as labels for people is misleading, as it forces people into mutually exclusive categories which are really only appropriate to describe acts.

We also take friendly exception to Mr. Hiller's notion that the homosexual "predisposition" results from a biological difference. We regard homosexual behavior as something which, in a free and humane society, would be natural and normal for everyone -- as would be heterosexual behavior.

We agree with the summary of current anthropological opinion given by Clelland S. Ford and Frank A. Beach in their Patterns Of Sexual Behavior:

"Men and women who are totally lacking in any conscious homosexual leanings are as much a product of cultural conditioning as are the exclusive homosexuals who find heterosexual relations distasteful and unsatisfying. Both extremes represent movement away from the original, intermediate condition which includes the capacity for both forms of sexual expression. In a restrictive society such as our own a large proportion of the population learns not to respond to or even to recognize homosexual stimuli and may eventually become in fact unable to do so. At the same time a certain minority group, also through the process of learning, becomes highly if not exclusively sensitive to the erotic attractions of a like-sexed partner. ... human homosexuality is not basically a product of hormonal imbalance or "perverted" heredity. It is the product of the fundamental mammalian heritage of general sexual responsiveness as modified under the impact of experience."

Finally, we feel that sexual freedom for adolescents is of prime importance. We feel adolescents should have the right to give sexual consent, and that the only valid ethical concern here is for mutual freedom of self-determination.

At this moment in the struggle for Gay Liberation (the movement by this name being just over a year old) we are encountering some of the same ideological obstacles as did the movement (by other names) in the 1920's. We sometimes have an uncanny feeling that history is literally repeating itself. What Marx called "the old shit" is still schlepping along. There are still Henri Barbusses around -- party hacks, who call themselves "Marxists", who speak of homosexuality as the "fascist perversion", who expound imbecile theories about how "homosexuality will not exist after the revolution" or how it is a "symptom of capitalist decadence".

Kurt Hiller's rebuttal to the false radicals, epitomised by Henri Barbusse, remains valid. In addition to this, the advance in modern sociology and anthropology, most notably the Kinsey studies just mentioned, now permit us to say unequivocally that homosexual acts are completely natural, as natural as any form of sexual activity.

We regard Marxism as "scientific socialism", the scientific philosophy and method for interpreting history. Indeed, The Red Butterfly is made up of gay Marxists. However, we must emphasise for the benefit of our old-, new-, and pseudo-left comrades who have not yet grasped Gay Liberation: the scientific mind is scientific

about everything! You simply do not adopt a scientific approach to economics; and then scrounge around for sexual attitudes in the trash heap of Judeo-Christian mythology!

The essence of Gay Liberation, as distinguished from the "homophiles" or other gay tendencies, is the realisation that gay oppression is not an accident, but is systematically related to the oppression and exploitation of other peoples. Consequently, true Gay Liberationists support all struggles for liberation and invite the participation of all in ours.

NO REVOLUTION WITHOUT US!

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Other Pamphlets:

<u>Gay Liberation</u>	<u>A Gay Manifesto</u>	<u>Gay Oppression: A</u>
		<u>Radical Analysis</u>
by The Red Butterfly	by Carl Wittman with Red Butterfly discussion	by The Red Butterfly

Pamphlets are 25¢ including postage.

The Red Butterfly is an association of gay men and women who as revolutionary socialists see their liberation linked to the class struggle.

Additional copies of this pamphlet are available. We are engaged in study and writing projects to develop a comprehensive radical analysis of Gay Liberation. On-going projects include critiques of religion, the family, and Women's Liberation. For additional materials, or a speaker for your group or school, write us.

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