

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

How Homosexuals and Lesbians Came Out Politically in the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) 1975-1979

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*"In these struggles, it is not a question of following the grand Leninist principle of the main enemy or of the weakest link. Neither do these immediate struggles await some future revolutionary moment, which will herald liberation, the disappearance of classes, the decline of the state, and the solution of problems. With respect to a theoretical hierarchy of explanations or to a revolutionary order which would polarize history and prioritize its moments, one could say that these struggles are anarchical struggles; they fit within the interior of a history which is immediate, which accepts itself and recognizes itself as infinitely open, Michel Foucault, "La philosophie analytique de la politique," lecture delivered April 27, 1978 in Tokyo, in *Dits et écrits*, p. 546, Paris, Gallimard, Volume 3, 1994.*

My initial intention in this paper was to address the multiple effects on the LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, a French Trotskyite revolutionary party) of the emergence of homosexual claims and struggles around 1975/1976, in the wake of the rise of the feminist movement at the beginning of the decade and its subsequent emergence in the LCR in 1973/1974. More precisely, I wanted to explore how the emergence of new ideas put forward by those movements provoked a not so silent revolution within the party, generating internal debates around the divide between the politicization of intimacy and sexuality, the virilist image of the revolutionary activist and the entire Trotskyite activist vanguard model. Such questions seem appropriate when reviewing the literature on the "68 Years"¹ which generally agrees on the following two points:

on one hand, the idea that the emergence of the feminist movement and, in its wake, the gay and lesbian movements, would have the effect of profoundly changing society and, first and foremost, at its heart the political groups who were advancing these demands. For example, for Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, the 68 Years were a time when *gender and political relationships clearly evolved and certainly affected individuals' social practices (not only in the case of activists), leading to profound transformations in sexuality, conjugality and family structures* (Zancharini-Fournel 2002: 143). Here we see that the idea of a profound transformation of social mores, according to a top down logic, is explicitly put forward; these new less conservative conceptions of social structures of oppression and domination would have spread first throughout activist

¹ Here we use the expression 68 Years to refer to the historical conjuncture following the may June 1968 events and that last in France till the very beginning of the 80's with the election of François Mitterrand as President (May 1981).

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circles, and only subsequently through the rest of the population;

and, on the other hand, the observation that activist groups of the 68 Years were not all equally receptive to the emergence of these new demands. Thus, in France, it is customary to oppose the vast majority of the parties of the extreme left, that is, of various Maoist tendencies, the Trotskyites of Lutte Ouvrière (LO [Worker's Struggle])² and the orthodox Trotskyites of the Organisation communiste internationaliste (OCI [Internationalist Communist Organization]), to the anarchists and to two related Trotskyite formations, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR [Communist Revolutionary League]) and Révolution!,³ which would have welcomed the feminist cause and the homosexual cause, even claiming to be a driving force in a number of their most important battles such as the fight for the right to contraception and abortion in 1973-1974 or the repeal of laws discriminating against homosexuals in 1979-1981 (Chaumier and Ubbiali 2002; Salles 2005; and Joshua 2015).

The LCR

The Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire (JCR [Communist Revolutionary Youth]) was founded in April 1966, in Paris, by a hundred activists excluded from the Union des étudiants communistes (UEC [Communist Student Union]) and the Jeunesse communiste (JC [Communist Youth]), a few members of the youth organization of the Parti socialiste unifié (PSU [Unified Socialist Party]) and a few former members of the Parti communiste internationaliste (PCI [International Communist Party]). The JCR became the Ligue communiste (LC [Communist League]) in 1969, the Front communiste révolutionnaire [Communist Revolutionary Front] after its dissolution by ministerial decree in 1973, and the Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR [Communist Revolutionary League]) from December 1974 until it disbanded in February 2009.

The LCR was Marxist-Leninist and Trotskyite in orientation and associated with the IVth International. References to the revolution, internationalism, antifascism and anti-Stalinism constituted the pillars of this organization which especially mobilized, and recruited members *via* its internationalist commitment, and found its primary source of recruitment in the educational milieu (amongst highschool, college and university students but also teachers).

It is noteworthy that the party produced a newspaper, *Rouge, journal d'action communiste* [Red, a newspaper of communist action], which began as a weekly publication (Rh), and then became a daily newspaper from March 1976 to February 1979 (Rq), before reverting to a weekly publication.

From the time of its foundation, this political organization had three principal distinguishing characteristics. The first was an activist practice of becoming involved in "mass movements," first in workers' and students' union organizations, but also in soldiers' committees, antinuclear protests, the women's movement, etc (each domain being organized in a specific "intervention sector"). The second was its manner of recruiting activists, through a preliminary selection, usually after an essentially theoretical training period. Once integrated into a cell, the new comrade remained under observation during an indeterminate period until his or her "official acceptance" (Salles 2005: 220-222). Finally, there was its distinctive socio-professional composition with a strong presence of the educational milieu. In 1971, 43% of its activists were students, 24% teachers and 25% salaried employees. In 1976, 24% of its activists were students, 25% teachers and 51% were then salaried employees (Salles 2005).

However, here we will see that the situation was perhaps not so clear cut. On one hand, as abundantly demonstrated in the feminist literature, whether academic or

² We choose here to use the French acronyms.

³ In fact, Révolution! stemmed from a split within the LCR at the time of its joining the IVth International.

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autobiographical (e.g. Boons and al. 1983; Gramaglia 1987, *Le féminisme et ses enjeux*, 1988; Bourg 2009, Frazier, Cohen 2009, and Clifford 2012), the acknowledgement of feminist, gay and lesbian struggles was actually superficial in the 68 Years' organizations and it was only after society had genuinely and profoundly changed that these groups timidly started to truly take this into account. In other words, to put it bluntly, the movements of the extreme left were followers rather than initiators in these transformations and, for the most part, resisted them as vigorously as other political actors.

In this paper, we take as a case study the emergence of homosexual struggle at the heart of the LCR, which was certainly the party most receptive to this cause in those years, refusing to ostracize any of its activists, accepting the internal debate (notably via its newspaper (*Rouge*), and its magazines (*Marx ou Crève/Critique communiste*, and *Cahiers du féminisme*), and going so far as to create a Commission nationale homosexualité (CNH [National Homosexual Commission]) in 1977. Nonetheless, we will see that this acknowledgement remained at the level of a Potemkin village throughout the 1970s and that the story that the CNH archives recount, like the testimonies of those principal actors who were then involved, reveals an organization bound by its ideological positions and mired in contradictions that it did not manage to conceal except by silence and passive resistance.

Finally, we will focus here on the years 1974-1979, years of the emergence and structuring of homosexual struggles, after the intense but brief sparks ignited by the FHAR⁴ at the start of the decade, and before a new sequence revealed itself, in 1979, with the explosion of gay social sites through the development of commercial locations, the flourishing of the activist and commercial press, and finally, the reformulation of the struggle around human rights which largely contributed to the social liberation of homosexuality, mostly in bringing together the forces of the left under the guidance of the Comité d'urgence anti Répression homosexuelle (CUARH [the Emergency Anti-Homosexual Repression Committee]) (Broqua, and Fillieule 2002; and Préaro 2014)

We will track the key chronological points of this history, divided into four periods, with particular attention to three central issues which appear to have strongly impacted the structure of debates and positions adopted by the actors involved: the (lack of a) place for lesbians in this history, between the hammer of the nascent homosexual movement and the anvil of the feminist movement; the question of homosexuality as a sector of intervention for the LCR or as an autonomous movement supported by the LCR, which is raising the question of the relationships between the party and the Groupes de Libération Homosexuelle (GLH [the Homosexual Liberation Groups]); and the emergence of day-to-day concerns and of the personal sphere, and the demand for "free spaces", leading to a rupture with the traditional conception of activism.

⁴ The FHAR was formed in 1971 in the wake of the MLF, launched a few months earlier by a group of lesbians. On the FHAR, please see Broqua, and Fillieule, 2002; Eribon 2003; and Fortin 2010.

We rely here on three types of sources:

1. A thorough examination of *Rouge* for the years 1972-1983 (systematically between March 1976 and February 1979 when the newspaper was published daily).
2. The archives conserved and collated by three founding members of the CNH (Suzette Robichon, Jean Cavailhès and Alain Lecoultre). These original archives include a great number of handwritten or typed documents, invaluable for understanding the daily work of the commission, the debates amongst members, and their relations to the Comité central [Central Committee] and the Bureau politique [Political Office] of the party. All of these documents were scanned and indexed at the University of Lausanne, and will soon be deposited with a yet-to-be-determined institution.
3. A series of interviews, informational and biographical, sometimes repeated, conducted by Maurice Avramito in the context of his master's thesis, in conjunction with Olivier Fillieule for one of them. These were supplemented by the rich personal archives of Christian de Leusse, an activist in the GLH of Marseille. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all these individuals for their help and their generous availability.

Prehistory

The question of homosexuality seems to emerge for the first time in *Rouge* the day after the May 1st demonstration of 1972, characterized by the spectacular appearance of the FHAR which scandalized the partisan and unionized left, due especially to the appearance of Gazolines, a radical fringe comprised of "fairies" and other creatures defying gender categorizations. While *Rouge* stated that one must fight against sexual repression in all its forms, a way of distinguishing between *virtuous critics of the PCF and of their manservants at the extreme-left, the AJS-OCI*, there is total disagreement with the *grotesque displays of the FHAR*, whose activists behaved like 'absolute fairies' [...] allowing the bourgeois and Stalinist press to discredit the demonstration completely in the eyes of the workers, and to threaten: *the extreme left will not allow its demonstrations to be misrepresented, even by the FHAR. The abject oppression of which homosexuals are victims excuses many things. It does not authorize everything. We hope that FHAR activists will understand this.*⁵

While the FHAR pleaded for recognition of the "revolutionary dimension of homosexuality," thus allowing the cause of homosexuals to be joined with that of all the oppressed, it intended to fight more broadly against sexism, phallocratism and "macho cop behavior" that is, masculine and heterosexual domination,⁶ notably in extreme leftist activist groups in which many had participated. Its existence would be short-lived, lesbians leaving very quickly to found Gouines Rouges [Red Dykes] or rejoin the women's movement. Two local Parisian groups continued to exist publicly through their respective publications, *Le Fléau social* and *L'Antinorm*.

At the end of 1973, the members of the latter attempted to launch "Sexpol" committees to raise the question of sexual oppression in all its dimensions with the "revolutionary project" of the destruction of the family, conceived "as the smallest basic cell of capitalist society." Invited to participate in these committees, the LCR categorically refused, both in the name of orthodox Marxism (the exploitation of salaried work by capital is the foundation of capitalist society and not oppression in all its

⁵ *Rouge* hebdo (RH) n° 156, 05/06/1972: 5.

⁶ Thus, Number 12 of the magazine *Tout* (April 23 1971), entitled "Libre disposition de notre corps," includes articles written by the FHAR: the main points of the group's positions are provided. Certain texts were later reprinted in the *Rapport contre le normalité* 1972.

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forms), and because they would not put all forms of sexual oppression (of women, young people and homosexuals) in the same category. This is the particular social and political significance of the oppression of women, as workers, wives and mothers, which would justify the existence of an autonomous women's movement *in which revolutionary women defend positions in the class struggle. In contrast, the simplifications of the Sexpol platform proposed by Antinorm seem to result from a vision in which capitalist society is an immense oppressive system, without the economic and social roots of this oppression being clearly identified.*⁷ Subsequently, homosexual movements must be considered as being both marginal and individual, spoiled by *libertarian illusions* and the *subterfuge of individual liberation*. Finally, *the claim for the liberation of the body is a deceit, pure and simple, good for providers of zen and yoga.*⁸

To summarize, in the middle of the 1970s, at the very same time when the Ligue was managing, not without difficulty and rather late, to recognize the importance of the women's movement and to invest in it (please see the box below), the opening of another front was simply not acceptable, the foundation of homosexuality being thought of as "a blemish of the decadent bourgeoisie." For the homosexuals of the Ligue, some of whom had had occasion to breathe in the wind of liberty which blew through the FHAR, it was a matter of remaining silent and attempting to forget that *knowing and thus fighting the oppression that we experience at an 'affective,' 'sexual,' level is particularly important, notably for an activist. An individual is not a machine comprised of completely separate airtight compartments (although capitalism does whatever possible to break down the individual).*⁹

The LCR and the feminist movement

The Mouvement de libération des femmes (MLF [Women's Liberation Movement]) was born in France between August and October 1970. The LCR did not see it coming and, at the outset, viewed their "petite bourgeois" demands, formulated with no respect for the class struggle, with considerable distrust. Noting a demonstration for the right to abortion and contraception organized by the MLF on the 20th of November, 1971, *Rouge* regretted the "outrageous sectarianism" of the MLF and its newspaper *Le Torchon brûle* (Rh n°134, 11/27/1971: 5.) and the same newspaper wondered, on March 8th of the same year whether *the 'people of women' whom the MLF was addressing would be the new and sole social class whose emancipation had to occur through the emancipation of all workers? [...] Sexual oppression, and the family are not exclusively women's problems* (Rh n°109, 04/12/1971: 6). However, *Rouge* echoed the demands of the movement, especially the nascent struggle for the right to contraception and abortion (Rh n°104, 03/08/1971: 6).

Within the party itself, the activists organized themselves into the essentially Parisian Flora Tristan circle, whose aim was to link the class struggle with women's rights. After a nationwide meeting in June 1974, the decision was taken to create a national newspaper, to compete with *Le Torchon brûle* of the MLF. The first issue was published on March 8th 1974. It was called *Les Pétoleuses*, "tendance lutte de classes du mouvement de libération des femmes [the class struggle faction of the women's liberation movement]," with the slogan "Elles ont fait de leur jupon un drapeau rouge [they made their skirt into a red flag]!"

It was only in the second half of the 1970s that "women's work" became one of the party's priorities, in a context of increasing drop outs and disengagement and the growing strength of feminist battles for the availability of free abortions (the birth of the MLAC-Mouvement pour libération de l'avortement et de la

⁷ Rh, December 1973-January 1974, "Quel Sexpol?" Unsigned, therefore reflecting the position of the editorial board of *Rouge*.

⁸ Ibidem. This article sparked a debate in *Rouge*. Please see the response of the *Antinorm* in Rh, "L'Antinorm aux lecteurs de *Rouge*," editorial board of the *Antinorm*. January 14, 1974 and in the same edition "A propos de l'article 'Quel Sexpol ?'" signed by readers and a distributor of *Rouge*.

⁹ "A propos de l'article 'Quel Sexpol ?'" ibidem.

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contraception [Movement for Freedom of Abortion and Contraception]) and also, to a lesser degree, increased attention to the problem of rape (Rq n° 109, 07/26/1976, Débat sur le viol [debate on rape]) and battered women (CdF n° 10, June-September 1979).

A national magazine was created, starting in November-December 1977, the *Cahiers du Féminisme* (CdF) (Trat 2011). It was bimonthly, and was produced by a small stable group of activists, whose first concern was to distinguish themselves from the MLF and especially from its psychoanalytical and political tendency to view men, without distinction, as the primary enemy. Finally, during their first conference (1974), the LCR adopted the goal of creating women's groups within companies and neighborhoods. These groups –named Sand groups, after the woman who suggested their creation- would be single-sex, to further the analysis of the oppression of women. In other words, these would explicitly be "consciousness raising groups." The success of these groups varied by city. Yet, in the end, as Salles stressed (2005), *the desire to create a permanent structured movement of women on the basis of class struggle failed, even though the LCR proved attentive, although a bit late, to the emergence of new feminist demands.*

Hooligans¹⁰ in the party—1976

In the middle of the 1970s, three series of factors explained why homosexuals in the Ligue began an internal campaign to effect change with respect to the homosexual question.

First, the movement seemed to be reborn with the creation of the Groupe de libération homosexuelle (GLH [the Homosexual Liberation Group]). Its appearance on the scene occurred through two attention-getting events. On April 27, 1975, a delegation attempted to leave a wreath at the monument for those deported, in the name of all homophiles dead in the Nazi camps. They were pushed back by the police; they participated in the 1975 May 1st parade and were driven back by the forces of order of the CGT. The GLH, which hoped to bring together homosexuals from all social categories and to avoid the unacknowledged elitism of the FHAR, adopted a recruitment strategy, which was deployed not only in the homosexual milieu but also in public spaces where the homosexual was also the man in the street. This determination to act with and in the interest of homosexuals in all their diversity did not manage to neutralize the divergent aspirations being expressed, and resulted in 1975 in a split into two main tendencies: a project both reformist and community-based brought forward by the GLH-Groupe de base (GLH-GB) and a revolutionary group, the GLH-Politique et quotidien (GLH-PQ [Politics and Daily Life]). A third tendency (GLH-14 December) did not come to fruition. Of the two groups, the GLH-PQ was dominant, in particular in leading to the creation of equivalent groups in the provinces. It also intended to transcend class divisions and it was with this in mind that the commercial milieu which was developing in Paris was stigmatized, through the denunciation of the ghettoization and reformism of American and British movements.¹¹ Its objective was to make homosexuality revolutionary, by working at both levels: politicizing homosexuals and making their voices heard in the ranks of other revolutionary groups.

¹⁰ The reference to hooliganism comes from Marx and Engels who refer to homosexual men as hooligans in their writings. During the Mao era, homosexuality was forbidden and appears in the "Hooligan Law" (Liu mang zui) from the criminal code.

¹¹ In February 1979, three activists from the CNH wrote "We do not want a French San Francisco" in Rq n° 852, Feb 4 1979 :15.

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Thus, within the Ligue, Jean Nicolas¹², who was also an activist in the GLH PQ, launched an initiative, calling a meeting of homosexuals in the region of Paris in February 1976. Alain Sanzio, a future member of the CNH and founder in 1979 of the magazine *Masques* recalls: *we were about thirty, roughly three-quarters boys, I think. Very amazed that we were so many queers in the Ligue. And so this meeting where everyone talked about their experience, it was very trendy, along the lines of some women's groups, this gathering was soon institutionalized and became the Commission homo parisienne (CHP [the Parisian Homosexual Commission]), there you go. And from all this, everything started and it is thanks to this detour by the Ligue that we found ourselves at the GLH-PQ.*¹³ This was also the time when *Rouge* became a daily newspaper, which created a considerable stir and allowed certain fulltime journalists to begin to publish letters from readers¹⁴ calling for the LCR to take a stand on the question, to cover the activities of the GLHs.¹⁵ and to report on sex offenses related to homosexuality.¹⁶

Secondly, in 1976 there were also indications of a burgeoning crisis in the LCR, with a continuous drop in numbers, after a peak of 3,800 members (Filoche 1998: 209; and Salles 2005: 343). Without getting into the detailed explanations offered for this crisis, analyzed elsewhere (Salles 2005; and Joshua 2015), this was mainly related to the fact that the hopes for an imminent revolution (the belief in which comes back to Daniel Bensaïd's expression, often quoted after May 68: "history is biting us on the neck") declined dramatically, with the easing off of the political battles in France, the divisive question of uniting the left in order to win the 1978 general elections and the 1981 presidential election, and, in particular, the collapse of international expectations after the fall of Allende in Chile and the "failed" revolution in Portugal. It was in this atmosphere that an entire range of types of individual suffering on the part of activists could be aired, since it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to wait for some shining future to resolve their personal problems. The first issues of the magazine *Marx ou crève* (*Marx or die*, renamed after one year as *Critique communiste*), which appeared in April-May 1975, echoed this question, marking at the same time both the necessity to *not leave to the ultra-left wing of the avant-garde [...] the exploitation of the virgin territory of the fringes of the workers' movement* and to *tackle theoretical cultural thought* (*Marx ou crève* 1975:4), in other words, to pose the question of the boundaries between private and public, between daily affairs here and now and the sacrifice for the cause and, finally, to address—to return to the traditional terms employed at the time—the problem of desire and activist subjectivity.¹⁷ Denise Avenas summarized this well in an article with the significant title: *l'idéal limitant ? [The Limiting Ideal?]* (*Marx ou crève*, n°2, 1975: 75-83), which was also drawn upon in the discourse of the future CNH and, still later, in the magazine *Masques*.

¹² The names we use here are the pseudonyms that were widely use in the LCR at that time.

¹³ Interview with Alain Sanzio, May 3 2015, conducted by Maurice Avramito (MA).

¹⁴ Eg. Jan. 16 1976, Rh n°331, Letters from readers "débatte de l'homosexualité," Unsigned; Jan. 23 1976, Rh, n°332, Letters from readers "des dossiers sur la sexualité" Signed J. A ; March 30, 1976, Rq, n°14, p. 9 on pederasty.

¹⁵ Eg. March 27 1976, Rq n°12. "fête avec le GLH," Unsigned; May 15 1976 Rq n°52, on the creation of a GLH in Rennes ; N° 56, "Paris 14° création d'un collectif homo" socialist, unsigned.

¹⁶ e.g. March 23 1976, Rq, n°8, p. 9. "L'art et la manière de fabriquer un scandale de mœurs," M.V.

¹⁷ The debate on desire was launched in relation to a discussion of the psychoanalysis and growing success of the works of Lyotard, Deleuze, etc. in an article by Pierre Péju and Alain Brossat in the first issue of the journal, (*Marx ou crève*, n°1, 1975 : 75-87), to which Avenas and, especially, Michel, an activist in the LCR, replied.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

Finally, the women's intervention sector, which the Ligue had trouble accepting, then supporting, with the hope of rivaling Révolution!,¹⁸ seemed to be somewhat dysfunctional from 1975-1976. On one hand, women still represented only 29% of the members of the organization and 37% of sympathizers at the party convention held in December 1974, a very modest increase from the previous convention;¹⁹ on the other hand, "women's work" had lost ground to Sand groups, single-gender consciousness-raising and discussion groups, apparently rarely functioning as a proselytizing and propaganda group and, thus, not well-situated to construct a women's movement on a class basis;²⁰ finally, after the high point of mobilization for a new law on the right to contraception and abortion that was passed at the start of 1975, the feminist movement turned towards causes which were profoundly divisive internally: rape and the call for "bourgeois justice to punish it,"²¹ violence against women with the birth of SOS-Femmes battues [SOS Battered women] groups (1976) which the LCR considered basically a mobilization of nonpolitical female patrons (Herman 2012; and Delage 2014), prostitution²² and, finally, transvestism/transsexuality.

In these conditions of scant political achievement in extending the struggles at the margins of the workers' movement, to which one must obviously add that very few men within the party indicated the least interest in the development of the women's movement,²³ it is not surprising that the demands advanced by the very new Commission parisienne homosexualité (CPH) fell on deaf ears and met only with polite indifference.

These difficulties did not prevent the CHP²⁴ from continuing its labors. These were threefold: a theoretical development of the questions of male and female homosexuality, to determine the common elements of oppression at play and to construct a strategy in connection with the women's movement and the workers' movement; convincing people that the homosexual question concerned not only homosexuals but everyone within the organization, starting with a reflection on "latent homosexuality" and "phallocratic behavior;" and developing a consideration of the modalities of intervention in/with the GLHs PQ in which, in Paris and in cities such as

¹⁸ According to Salles, the launch in May 1974 of *Femmes en Lutte*, *bulletin de liaison des groupes femmes* by Révolution ! came at the very moment when *Les pétroleuses* saw their audience diminish (Salles 2005).

¹⁹ A survey within Révolution !, conducted in 1976, indicated that women comprised 38% of activists. That same year, the group established the equivalent of Sand groups within the LCR, although less formally (Boons et al. 1983: 69 and 193).

²⁰ Salles also indicates that two years after the creation of these groups, the national women's commission noted their exclusive focus on consciousness raising activities. For more on the Sand groups, please see Lathus 2004.

²¹ E.g. Rh n° 335, Feb. 13 1976, p. 7, Rq n° 27, April 14 1976, Rq n° 36, "Viol et justice," Rq n° 109, July 26 1976. Debate on rape.

²² CdF n° 5, June-July-August 1978, "Dossier prostitution," pp. 20-39. On prostitutes' movements and the intervention to support them, please see Mathieu 2001.

²³ Jacquemart (2015) effectively revealed how the involvement of men in the feminist movements was a real exception in this period, with the corollary of the avoidance of any questioning of masculinities and the activist virilism prevalent in the LCR.

²⁴ This became a commission of the Bureau politique whose work was followed by Puech. This means that it was denied the status of a national commission. *From its first meetings, the commission was mixed, uniting about twenty comrades: two male comrades who had been present in the GLH PQ since the split of the GHL in December 1975, four to five lesbian comrades from the women's section, of whom some had occasionally appeared in the GLH PQ, and, finally, comrades from the organization who had never been active in the movement*, CNH archives, Bilan commission homosexualité, 1977.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

Marseille, Bordeaux and Rouen, activists were involved, by posing the question of their primary and secondary commitments.

Then, a series of texts were produced on "Sexuality and Bourgeois Power,"²⁵ "The Specific Oppression of Homosexuals"²⁶ and "The League and Homosexuality"²⁷ which provided the content of a special section in *Rouge* which appeared in June (n°70, "L'homosexualité sort du ghetto" [Homosexuality Comes out of the Ghetto], with the list and addresses of the GLHs in France), and then a Bulletin intérieur [BI Internal Bulletin] (BI 45, dated July 1976) intended to be circulated amongst local chapters and various sectors, e.g. workers, migrants, women, students sectors - See box 1), to initiate debate. Without detailed consideration of this copious text, let us draw attention to four revealing elements.

First, Bi 45 starts with a quite virulent denunciation of phallocratism in the LCR:

"The police, the army and the Ligue, the only point these three organizations seem to have in common is the fact of being organizations, but nonetheless... However, they have another in common. To various degrees, these three organizations are forbidden to women. [...] First and foremost, these organizations are a man's world, not only numerically, but structurally in their way of functioning, and their underlying psychological and ideological bases. [...] Let's look around us at how the Ligue appears—in its internal meetings, how does it present itself?—in external appearances, how do we behave?—and not only at the level of the Service d'ordre [SO, marshal service]. Virility, a "big mouth," physical strength and "male courage" are values which prevail in our ranks. The competition between activists, in the organization, the affirmation of one's personal superiority (compared to other activists, male or female), in the street, confronting the cops or the fascists, even facing the press... These are commonplace, things which are part of everything that is forbidden to women although the Ligue is also their organization, and these things also give the Ligue a certain characteristic external image (militant/military)... which very often gives pause to a number of sympathizers considering joining (often workers, male or female). Ambiguous gestures between male activists (jokes?...), brawls and good whacks on the back for fun, drinking "amongst pals" (and yes, that happens...), the gangs of activist men that sometimes exist in the organization, there too we find out what holds together repressive institutions, latent homosexuality, is expressed in the Ligue.²⁸

It continues by listing the types of suffering amongst homosexual activists generated by this phallocratism, stressing in the same vein as Denise Avenas in *Marx ou crève* the previous year, the fact that, above all, the invocation of personal problems and everyday concerns comes back to political problems, which were largely responsible for the crisis in recruiting and the wave of defections the party was experiencing.

"For example: experiencing a total disconnect between one's activist and professional life and one's private life, feeling guilty all the time, when one sees no other solution, when one is dying of loneliness after a meeting, because you're going to go cruising in the ghetto, with the fear of falling into the hands of the cops. For example: seeing your political progress halted, sometimes being called into question, because regularly, the tension builds up and it boils over, nothing works anymore: it hits you at any moment, sometimes right in the middle of a battle: impossible to read, to speak about politics, to speak at all. For example: to not be able to say to an activist that you love him, that you desire him: it's inconceivable! And what would the cell say! Even worse when it is a sympathizer: what image would this give of the organization, of the seriousness of the activist who is in charge of organizing the sympathisers? Then... you regroup, you restrain yourself, and you return, with rage in your heart buried in the ghetto which you abhor. The worst of all this is that, with few exceptions, it is impossible

²⁵ CNH archives, April 18 1976, 5 pages. Typed, not signed.

²⁶ CNH archives, April 24 1976, 8 pages, Signed Charles.

²⁷ CNH archives, May 6 1976, Nicolai, 5 pages, Signed Nicolai.

²⁸ CNH archives, BI 45.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

to talk about these problems with one's comrades, though one works with them every day. At first glance, they should be the ones most likely to listen to us, to understand us. But the ears of the activists, very open to the grand music of political discourse (which is necessary), are often closed when it is no longer a question of the clamor of history, but simply of the murmur of daily life, trivial, nagging—and political as well. So, one withdraws, turns inward, one comes to think that really these are just little “personal problems,” one imagines that no one else is going through this. There's nothing left but to work for the cause, work for the cause, until the day when it is no longer possible, and when one defects silently with no political disagreement, without the means to debate these questions in the political arena. [...] The question is not unrelated to another current debate: that which affects the crisis of activism. Of course, the reasons for this crisis of activism go beyond the single issue of homosexuality; they can be found in the evolution of the political context, in the period which followed the explosion of May 68; they are also determined by the horizon of political perspectives which may appear to some as temporarily blocked, they are connected to the difficulties of social integration of an entire generation of young activists who gained access to the political realm in the wake of May 68. [...] It is in this context that, in our view, we can best situate a debate on homosexuality.

Secondly, we are struck by the considerable efforts deployed to convince the Ligue's activists (and maybe also to convince themselves) that the “homosexual question” can and must be analysed through a Marxist lens, the oppression of homosexuals, like that of women, being embedded in the process of capitalist exploitation. As for the demand for a “homosexual identity,” it is similarly vilified, as marking a break with both the struggle against capitalism and the women's movement. All this leads to very academic demonstrations effectively revealing to what extent the simple demand for a positive homosexual identity is still unspeakable, every “peripheral” battle needing to give way to the priority of priorities, the class struggle.²⁹ Alain Sanzio stresses this when he recalls this moment:

“This was an attempt to give a Marxist content to some questions which up until now seemed marginal and, as we say, private. Well, these questions were not only questions about our assholes, they had a political content; they would be part of the struggle against capitalism. The Ligue was reassured, there were well-developed Marxist bases, and, therefore, we could consider that the homosexual fight was part of the field of respectable struggles [...] Because we were so indoctrinated with this discourse and it was so vital to appear serious, to seem to be good Marxists... Well, I wrote things of which I do not believe a single word. But I wrote this because something had to be written.”³⁰

Thirdly, the text defended the thesis of a specific oppression of male homosexuals which led the authors to consider that the oppression of lesbians was different in nature and to conclude from this that the political consequence was that, first and foremost, they needed to organize within the women's movement:

“male homosexuality is repressed because it is opposed to the norm and endangers the family; at least it is recognized; female homosexuality does not even have any social status, since it is denied, along with all female sexuality. While it is allowed to exist, this is to satisfy males' pleasure in voyeurism (in porno films, for example) but it has no social consequence. [...] We think that there is a “conflictual convergence” between our struggle and the struggle of women. A convergence: because our questioning of the sexual norm which oppresses homosexuals and denies the presence in the social body of a latent repressed homosexuality is consistent with women's struggle to have their own sexuality recognized, when the bourgeois social discourse on sexuality is a male discourse on their own sexuality. Conflictual: because even if we are victims of a specific oppression as homosexuals, we

²⁹ Jean Nicolas played a key role in this work of theoretical justification. Moreover, he returned to much of this analysis in an article published in *Critique communiste*, entitled “la question homosexuelle,” n° 11-12, Dec 1976-Jan 1977.

³⁰ Please also see an identical analysis in the CNH archives, “Le discours : la CHP et le sexe des anges,” a document in preparation for the national homosexual meeting of December 1977.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

are participating as men in the oppression of women, because our upbringing gave us access to power and to male knowledge. The links that we have to build with the women's movement will not be through the presence of women in the homosexual movement, but through continuous education in the male homosexual movement about the oppression of women, through a conscious and constant struggle against all displays of phallogocritism, through debates with women on these questions and, occasionally, through common actions. In conclusion: we are aiming for a group of radicalized male, not mixed gender, homosexuals on an anti-capitalist basis (linked with the workers' movement) and from the perspective of a struggle against bourgeois sexual norms (in connection with the women's autonomous movement)."

Finally, still in terms of the strategic plan, BI 45 provides an overview of the activist forces in the nascent homosexual movement to underscore the fact that only the GLH-PQ was advancing a revolutionary project. Yet this group would not know how to lead a mass movement, whether it would intervene with a Sexpol approach (thus, open to consideration of all sorts of sexuality) or from a community and identity perspective. It should act as a trailblazer *in raising the question of homosexuality in revolutionary organizations and, perhaps in the future, in unions and reform-minded organizations, in order to have at least a faction of the workers' movement assume responsibility for this problem.* Finally, the text called for a structured and national intervention on the part of the Ligue in the GLH-PQ:

"We believe that our participation in the GLH-PQ has been positive until now. [...] Nonetheless, with the development of the GLH-PQ, it becomes increasingly urgent to pass from this preliminary informal stage to a coherent intervention, organized in a series of groups ('factions' in the language of the party) At the same time, the question arises as to our intervention and the strength of the organization of our faction in the national arena, while, as of now, only the comrades in the region of Paris are involved in the GLH-PQ."

May 1st, 1976: breaking through the marshal cordon of the CGT with the march of women, the GLHPQ demonstrates with other workers.

Is it possible to identify as a homosexual, to want to construct an autonomous movement, to display our solidarity with the working class, and our convergence with the women's movement? (GLH-PQ, "Homosexualité ? Hétérosexualité ? Sexualité! Premier mai: fête des travailleurs," Tract of May 1st 1976.)

This first political program gave rise to a polemic within the CNH itself with respect to the dubious theorization concerning the exclusion of lesbians from the struggle, notably via a text, signed by Nitrate and Villon, written in August 1976 but distributed at the beginning of September only to local chapters and to sectors, as well as the central committee.³¹ In particular, there one learns that the lesbians have deserted the GLH in Paris, as well as the CHP, due to *discrimination within the organization* and that the lesbians who had to provide a text for the BI 45 were not able to do so, thus their absence. The introduction to the text launched an appeal:

The army, the police, the league... and the GLH-PQ have this in common: BEING FORBIDDEN TO WOMEN.... [...] The goal of this text is to clarify this analysis and to critique it, BUT ALSO TO CALL UPON FEMALE AND MALE EX-PARTICIPANTS AND FUTURE PARTICIPANTS to participate in the development of arguments opposing BI 45 which concludes with a clear-cut position:

"WHAT THE COMRADES ARE IN THE PROCESS of building, with the most marvelous good (un)-consciousness, IS NOTHING BUT A MOVEMENT OF GUYS, BY AND FOR GUYS; and if it remains like this THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT WILL HAVE TO FIGHT IT.

³¹ CNH archives, Nitrate-Villon text distributed to the DV and DS, beginning of November, undated, 13 pages.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

THEREFORE, WE PROPOSE THAT THE INTERVENTION IN THE GLH PQ BE MIXED FROM THE START. (...) It is a matter of posing the REAL QUESTION: doesn't the place of lesbians in this society justify the INTEGRATION of their struggle into any movement which says it is "FOR HOMOSEXUAL LIBERATION?" and doesn't such a group, which only attacks the problem of male homosexuality, have every chance of exhibiting "spontaneous" tendencies towards misogyny and phallocratism?"

A mixed national homosexual meeting³² was then scheduled for November 6th and 7th, 1976. On this occasion, there was an exchange of views and finally an agreement was reached,³³ producing a report³⁴ which recognized the need for the GLH to be mixed and announcing a presence of the commission at the next convention to be held in the following months, its recognition as a commission of the Central committee (and, therefore, no longer of the Political bureau, without independent status), and the launching of a campaign for a national conference. In the meantime, BI 52 appeared at the end of December, with the intention of "correcting" BI 45. In this issue, the question of female homosexuality and its necessary integration into the Commission homo as a recognized GLH was broached.³⁵

In BI 52, we can note three points which clarified the particularly uncomfortable situation of lesbians in the LCR, caught between a women's movement which ignored them and a somewhat misogynistic gay movement concerned with its own autonomy. On the one hand, the text acknowledged the reasons lesbians were not able to express themselves as they would have liked within the homosexual commission, their absence from the movement and the early development of the question of the *total failure of the women's movement on the issue* and, finally, due to *the unconscious phallocratic behavior of men and female comrades' difficulties in speaking out within the commission: the weight of male homosexuality in meetings, reports of very theoretical discourse from the outset, and a lack of encouragement for individual involvement, leading to a still very traditional functioning within the commission.*³⁶ On the other hand, the report on the engagement of the women's movement in the LCR was exceedingly bitter. It contained two principal reproaches. The first was that, in the name of the struggle against the main enemy, i.e. *the main branch of MLF (the 'central MLF')* and for *the mobilization of women workers [...] the problem of lesbianism was pushed aside and then forgotten*, to such an extent that *lesbians' awakening was, at least in our party, masked by the emergence of the women's movement*. Furthermore, they then saw the particulars of their oppression denied within the women's movement and their lesbian identity somehow dissolved in the "lesbian experimentation" of a number of heterosexual activists, making specifically lesbian activist places, outside of the women's movement, even more necessary:

"For a number of friends, homosexual intercourse is not exclusive and, because they experience it 'in' the movement, it does not seem to them that this experience is subject to a specific form of oppression. However, for the signatories of the present text, this is not the case. Indeed, either we are lesbians who also have heterosexual relationships, or we are lesbians who, going back to well before joining the

³² The training period included very few individuals from the provinces and even fewer who were not already recognized within the organization as homosexuals.

³³ CNH archives, Draft circular of the CHP of November 26, 1976 to be distributed to the DV and DS.

³⁴ CNH archives, text of the report dated Nov. 11, 1976, sent to all cells of the LCR.

³⁵ CNH archives, BI 52 of CERS (Cahiers de Recherches Socialistes [Socialist Research Notebooks]) with: 1/ "lesbiennes voient rouge !" (Signed by Nitrate, Stéphanie, Garde, Thalou, Monique, and Triton who signed but was not committing to the mixed section of the GLH because of not participating in the discussions); 2/Preliminary report of the CHP, 3/responses of the signatories of BI 45, December 1976.

³⁶ A reproach that very often appears in the literature. E.g. Boons et al. 1983, Pagis 2007; Achin Naudier 2010; and Joshua (2015).

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

women's movement, have never had the desire for heterosexual relationships. In any case, the history of the formation of the 'class struggle women's movement' (Courant lutte de classe) has never allowed us the expression of this experience, nor provided an analysis of how this experience could have political consequences in terms of intervention with respect to lesbians, even when they hide away amongst the working class. Therefore, in every case, we experience our homosexuality differently than other friends in the movement who have become homosexual in the movement."³⁷

The Silent World, January 77—August 1977

At the start of 1977, the situation was certainly particular. Some texts were produced to circulate amongst heads of local chapters and sectors and, at the time of its second convention, the Comité central announced a debate on the question to be held the next summer. For their part, the GLHs expanded and their demonstrations multiplied. Nonetheless, the archives leave no doubt as to the reality of the situation: the top-level leadership of the LCR seemed to be doing all in its power to avoid an extension of the debate and the adoption of a clear position. Texts and letters abound in the archives attesting to the party's formidable silence in the face of the on-going agitation. The member of the Bureau politique designated to follow the theoretical development of the commission deserted it precipitously.³⁸ The intervention in the GLHs occurred without the least support or direction from the leadership; indeed, it was sometimes made difficult due to the pressure exerted on the activists concerned.³⁹ Thus, one learns that the circulation of texts, or convocation to the Paris meeting in November 1976 was not really organized locally, documents often being lost, which partially explains the total absence of discussion of BI 45 and 52 by local chapters or sectors...⁴⁰ Under these conditions, the homosexuals of the party did not take the risk of coming out of the closet; As a result, it was the same small, essentially Parisian, group who led discussions and debates. On their side, the lesbians managed to obtain neither a debate on lesbianism within the Commission nationale femme nor the formation of a specific group within the organization to discuss it, as many articles in *Rouge* attest.⁴¹ This point is essential. The texts of the CHP stress the supposed number of gays and lesbians in the LCR (from 8 to 10%) to underscore the need not to "lose them," in a context of a crisis in recruiting and the growing power of autonomous homosexual and lesbian movements. However, it did not manage to mobilize them, as reflected in the few participants over the weekend of November 1976 and at the national conference of December 1977. In this situation, there was even the threat of outing members of the central committee who had not publicly declared themselves to be homosexuals and had thus failed to set an example for grassroots activists.⁴² Overall, in the same way that certain families that consider

³⁷ Which certainly reflects an ambiguity shared by all the women's groups of the period, as Chauvin stressed, (2006: 119) quoting Bard (2003: 190-193).

³⁸ CNH archives. Letter from the CHP to the CC of the LCR. Text written by six comrades, of whom four participated regularly in the CHP (before August 1977).

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ CNH archives, text of report dated Nov. 11 1976 sent to all cells of the LCR.

⁴¹ April 22, 1977, Rq 330, "L'homosexualité féminine. Le mouvement des Femmes a-t-il une réponse pour les lesbiennes ?" Signed by Guérolée, Nitrate, Stéphanie, and Triton.

⁴²: "Let's make a splash, we will tell you (news travels quickly in the ghetto) that the CC has many more homosexuals (both male and female) than you could count simply from those who come forward and make demands as such. Obviously, for us, this is not a matter of accusing anyone of hiding his or her nonconformity. We know from experience how hard it is to present oneself as a revolutionary homosexual

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

themselves liberal are eager to forget the coming out of their children to continue to act as though nothing has occurred, the leadership was silent and denied the activists. In these conditions, as a member of the Commission stressed in a virulent text of October 1977, it was:

“a petition for bankruptcy! But who are the liquidators? In comparison to the progress at the start of the CHP 18 months earlier (please see BI 45), the balance sheet is simple:
-Departure of approximately 80% of the members of the CHP (only two rejoined another organization, the CCA⁴³);
-Complete marginalization of homosexuals and homosexuality within the LCR (progress at the level of *Rouge* being due to the individual action of Nicolai and then Triton);
-Incapacity of the LCR to make any progress on the question (unfortunately the same was true of the OCT!) or even to debate it: not a single response to our circulars, no response either from the Bureau politique to our 2 letters... [...] This bankruptcy is that of the LCR, and explains the departure of comrades for whom their presence within the LCR made no sense.”⁴⁴

In fact, as the box below illustrates, in addition to the silence, there were sometimes even sanctions, when the exasperated activists attempted to increase their visibility at public appearances of the LCR.

Demonstration of May 24, 1977

On the occasion of a union day of united action to defend labor, the LCR organized its own separate procession. A group of women and homosexuals from the party headed it, disregarding the instructions of the Bureau Politique. The latter individually sanctioned the women concerned for their gesture and for having “made a pact with” some women from some CCAs. On June 7th, three members of the CHP wrote a letter to the BP in reaction. Extracts:

There were no friends from CCAs in the ranks of women. In fact, there were, just on the side, activists from CCAs, this must be what the BP saw; but what were they doing? They were amongst a group of homosexuals from the GLH-PQ, who had come to join the women. [...] Since we joined them in the demo, we ask for the same sanctions to be applied to us. But let us be clear: We are asking that this be a collective sanction, a political decision of the LCR, and not, as the BP is demanding, additional individual sanctions voted by the BP. [...] A little courage, comrades, and dare to stand up for your positions. Or perhaps, we need to conclude that you are not very sure of yourselves, that, to be blunt, seeing women and homosexuals demonstrating and contesting the practices of our organization makes you ill at ease and causes you to question yourself strangely? And so strangely that you “forget” to see homosexuals there?

But let us explain a bit what this demonstration represented for us.

and the questioning that this entails. What we object to is an organization which does not question itself on the situation it is creating for the homosexuals within its own ranks.” Letter from the CHP to the CC of the LCR (before August 1977). Text written by six comrades, of whom four participated regularly in the CHP.

⁴³ The Comités communistes pour l'autogestion [Communist Committees for Self-Government] were created on May 7 and 8, 1977 by “Pablist” activists from the PSU and some activists from the LCR. Their founding convention took place at Lyon in October of the same year.

⁴⁴ MOATIK, “Au-delà du bien et du male” Text mimeographed, then reprinted in BI 74.

Tuesday, at ten in the morning, in tight formation, each in her/his own union; very normal, very anonymous, shouting out now and then when we could, a rather "leftist" slogan aimed at the bureaucrats and energizing the procession a bit. But, above all, having carefully arranged at the bottom of our pockets a large red handkerchief, our badges of the GLH and our shameful abnormality.

And so, and so, the union demo over, we returned quickly to the Bastille, staunch protestors, with revolutionaries swelling our ranks. And there we found again, scattered throughout, several activists from the GLH-PQ. It was pleasant to find them again, to come together, in this demo from which both the unions and the revolutionary organizations were excluding us. [...]

So, in this demo, we felt ourselves excluded in fact, even more so when we knew that this was not by chance or an oversight, that it very well reflected the internal attitude of the LCR to homosexuals who wanted to force a debate. Excluded because we can no longer tolerate those embarrassed or frankly scandalized glances from revolutionary militants that surround us when we assert ourselves as homosexuals. Or simply when we kiss each other in greeting. Excluded because we knew too well that, yet again, it was useless to wait for the loudspeakers in the march, even for a little bit of a slogan that referred to us.

And, so, we demonstrated together, in the ranks of the LCR, again picking up its slogans but also ours, those of the GLH, thus affirming at least some presence of homosexuals in the struggle. First we demonstrated at the end of the procession and then (LO demonstrators deafened us) in the middle. Then, having learned that some women in front had had the same reflex, we joined them.

Who are we? 3 activists from the LCR. But also about twenty activist homosexuals from the CCAs and from the OCT, unorganized individuals, former members of the LCR, or even activists from the PC and the PS (they exist, even there!). Twenty people, in any case, who joined the procession of the LCR and used its slogans, which they would never have done without this.

Signed: Kyzil (Pontoise), and Moatik, Villon.

Also the situation became complicated in the eyes of the party due to the rise in power, certainly relative but still apparent, of the GLH,⁴⁵ from then on present in some twenty cities⁴⁶ and capable of leading their own initiatives, that is, without any need for the patronage of extreme-left groups.⁴⁷ For example, we see evidence of this in "homosexual week," with a film festival and debates at the movie theater l'Olympic in Paris, on which *Rouge* reported in detail⁴⁸ or, even more spectacularly, in the announcement by the GLH of Aix-en-Provence of the presentation of a list of homosexuals at the municipal elections of 1977 (an action which was finally abandoned), or again in 1978 in the presentation by the Parisian GLH-PQ in 1978 of candidates for legislative elections, including Guy Hocquenghem and Jean Le Bitoux (Le Bitoux 2003: 168-173).

As with the feminist movement in 1973, the question arose as to whether-according to the Leninist doctrine of the first four conventions of the Communist International, activists may act nationally as an organized subset within the GLHs to take the lead or whether, on the contrary, with the same logic as that of investment in the MLACs, it is preferable to be active in the GLHs without seeking to take control and accepting alliances with activists from other organizations from the extreme left (and, in particular, from the OCT), indeed from the reformist left (PSU, Parti socialiste [the Socialist Party]). In this debate, the Commission readily reminded everyone of the strategy of the Ligue vis-à-vis the women's movement, which had the effect of fragmenting ('cartelization' in the language of the time) the movement.

⁴⁵ CNH archives, "Textes de préparation de la rencontre sur l'homosexualité des 2-3 déc. 1977," November 1977, signed Thalou.

⁴⁶ Please see, for example, the list of GLHs published in Rq n°328 which includes 19 groups in France.

⁴⁷ Rq n°328, April 20 1977, "Tribune libre GLH PQ La semaine homosexuelle," April 20 1977.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, "tribune libre du GLH-PQ, La semaine homosexuelle."

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

It was in this critical atmosphere that the publicized debate on homosexuality took place at the Comité central in August 1977. The two opposing resolutions were an accurate reflection of the issues of the time. On one hand, the Triton resolution demanded the creation of a national homosexual commission composed of Hymanée (Marseille), Yvan (Dijon), and Thalou and Triton (Paris), one comrade from the women's commission and one comrade from the BP, responsible for following up on the work, beginning the development of the structure for intervening in existing homosexual and lesbian organizations and finally of preparing a national meeting on homosexuality open to concerned activists. To preserve the anonymity of faint-hearted activists, it was proposed that *comrades interested in this meeting must register directly with the commission, with travel expenses to be reimbursed by the central office. This last exceptional measure is to allow homosexual comrades who have not come out publicly in their city to participate in this meeting, one of the goals of which is to correct this situation as soon as possible.*⁴⁹ On the other, the resolution brought forward by Matti (the pseudonym of Gérard Filoche), the driving force behind a faction supporting ouvrierism in the party and fundamentally hostile to "peripheral struggles," declared that *the platform of the GLH-PQ (to which most of our comrades are committed), its modalities of functioning, and its orientation, do not correspond to our tasks as Marxist revolutionaries. Therefore, the Ligue must limit its intervention to the central plank of the defense of democratic rights for homosexuals.* The resolution also called for the creation of a mixed (heterosexual and homosexual) national homosexuality commission to open a new sector of the struggle directed, like the others, by a national faction. The Triton resolution was carried by 33 votes to 6 (including Thalou, Matti's partner) and three abstentions. The national homosexuality commission was born.⁵⁰

Cries and Whispers, August 1977 – January 1979

The creation of the Commission nationale changed nothing of the Ligue's strategy, it appears. It had to serve as a Potemkin village in such a way as to distinguish the Ligue, from the "Stalinist" parties (the PCF, of course, but also the Lambertists and Lutte ouvrière, LO) as well as from the "less advanced" parties such as the OCT, and at little cost. Yet, at its core, nothing changed. The law of silence and the obstacles to the distribution of the commission's texts continued, the question of modalities of the intervention in the GLHs remained unresolved. Evidence of this appeared in a text dated November 1977 (and was later picked up again in BI 74) in which the signatories (Hymanée, Thalou, Yvan and Moatik) wrote:

What a faction: we are not the red section in the GLH! [...] To be recognized (legitimized by the BP), we presented ourselves as the red section of the GLHs...To then very quickly reject this empirically since we understood in practical terms that it would be meaningless (what discipline when one speaks of one's experience, when one writes a tract for heterosexuals?) And also because very quickly we felt that we were rather the GLH section of the LCR... [...] For the CC, as for the party (at least there where the question was debated!), homosexuality is perceived as a potential intervention sector like others, liable to receive

⁴⁹ CNH archives, "Débat homosexualité en CC," August 1977, p.9.

⁵⁰ CNH archives, Autumn 1977: BI 71, Minutes of the CC (Comité Central) August 77 including the debate on the LCR and the queers.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

the same "treatment" as any other sector. [...] now, for us homosexuality is not and will never be a "sector:" it is a form of oppression to which we are subject within and outside of the LCR. The LCR might possibly be able to help us: if so, all the better, if not...we're used to it. Thus, for us, it is not a matter of jumping on the bandwagon and making up for lost time to avoid the development of a movement of radicalization outside of the organization. It is a question of envisaging what kind of support the LCR could offer to the struggle in which (male and female) homosexuals are engaged.⁵¹

The perspective of the party convention of January 1979 mobilized the energies of the CNH. The objective was twofold: on one hand, find the means for homosexuals in the Ligue to come out of the closet, in other words to make up the numbers. This was the goal of the national meeting planned for December 1977; on the other hand, the aim was to produce theses on homosexuality, which could be presented, discussed, amended and voted on at the convention to define a clear line of intervention.

The first objective was not reached. Despite the measures taken to facilitate the coming of comrades from the provinces, the national homosexual meeting of December 3rd and 4th, 1977 only brought together 22 people, including 12 from Paris and its region and one third women. This was a failure in itself. Few amongst those present had not already been identified as homosexuals.⁵² Of course, there are many reasons for this⁵³ but, for the CNH, there is no doubt that the leadership did everything in its power to hinder the distribution of information and discourage activists from attending. In a letter to the CC dated January 1978, the CNH is complaining about the preparatory texts for the meeting which were to appear in November in the BI for discussion prior to the meeting but, for quite unconvincing reasons, were finally not published in time. Furthermore, the circular with the invitation was not well distributed, indeed not distributed at all, e.g. in cities such as Toulon.⁵⁴ Consequently, the CNH demanded the publication of this letter, *four pages of BI for the minutes of the meeting, to indicate clearly that the responsibility for shortfalls, the BI, and circulars, lay with the political leadership or the machinery, who were behind this delay.*⁵⁵

While pages of BI were allocated, of course, management did not seek to establish responsibility for the blockages. And for good reason, since this type of blockage was, in fact, the rule. In testimony, amongst other episodes, the absence of organized debates in cities on the homosexual question throughout the legislative campaign of 1978, the polemic in reaction to the way in which *Rouge* covered the demonstration of May 1st 1978 (please see this in the box below) or the fact that the CHP, in a threatening letter, warns *the interfederal organization pleasantly that it has the intention of taking a stand at the meeting of Oct 12.... It seems superfluous to reiterate the protestations about forgetting a stand dedicated to the queer intervention of the LCR in Paris, which amounts to the identical attitude of the meeting (at Pantin). Nonetheless, since the CHP has not managed to resign itself to such "memory losses" on the part of the leadership, we would like to meet you—at a future CHP or you could send a representative from the interfederal organization, or we could attend a meeting at any date you suggest. Hoping that after two*

⁵¹ CNH archives, "Textes de préparation de la rencontre sur l'homosexualité des 2-3 déc. 1977," November 1977.

⁵² CNH archives, Circular of the CNH for DV-DS "Bilan de la rencontre homo de décembre" (January 1978). Signed IVAN and Hymanée for the CNH.

⁵³ CNH Archives, Letter from the CNH to CC "rencontre nationale homo de déc. 77," Signed Hymanée (January 1978).

⁵⁴ CNH archives, Letter from the CNH to the CC "rencontre nationale homo de déc. 77" (January 1978).

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

years and six months of existence we will manage to meet "our" leadership. Big kisses. Moatik.⁵⁶

Rouge changes! And for the homosexuals?

Rouge claims to be a revolutionary newspaper, "at the heart of life, at the heart of struggles." Noble intentions. It is probably from this perspective that the newspaper covered May 1st in Paris, going so far as to quote "in disarray... but without any derogatory intention," the three large groups of foreigners. Bravo! What significance could the silence about the homosexual (female + male) processions of about 1,000 participants have?

Comrades, this time we will not settle for ritual technical explanations of the type "so and so was in charge," in as much as a member of the Parisian homosexual commission communicated at 6:30 p.m., that very evening, with the individual responsible for the information at Rouge...

This is why we demand the publication in Rouge of this clarification, along with an explanation by the newspaper. Your negation of homosexual groups engaged in the struggle reflects the degree of alienation which affects even revolutionary activists. Comrades, it is not enough to publish articles by members of the CHP or to proclaim your agreement with the recent stands of the LCR on homosexuality. (Please see the manifesto: "Oui le socialisme.") These have to be put into practice; and this task concerns all the activists of the LCR and, of course, the journalists of Rouge and the editorial board. Commission homo parisienne, letter to the editor of Rouge May 3, 1978.

NB: May 21st, a new letter addressed to the BP complained of the absence of response to earlier letters and threatened to inform the general press (*le Monde*, and *l'Humanité*) of how the LCR was presenting obstacles to the struggle of queers within its organization.

If we come back to the meeting of December 1977, on which the PV manuscript is rich in information about the mood of CNH members and, more generally, of the activists concerned, we have to note that the seeds of discouragement and disengagement were already very present. The meeting began with going around the table, allowing each person present to bear witness to the situation in his or her city. The picture was rather somber: what was happening was occurring in the GLHs or the GLFs (Groupe de libération des femmes [women's liberation group], and lesbian autonomous groups), the Ligue always acting as a brake; within the party, *we are at best tolerated*, and sometimes victims of machismo and ostracism, notably when it is a matter of being kept at a distance from "blue-collar labor;" in Toulouse, the queers have almost all left the Ligue and the lesbians are hiding.

As for the question about what to do in the future, responses focus on three difficulties and one requirement. These are the difficulty of managing the coexistence of men and women within the movement, with contrasting situations depending on the GLH and the existence or not of local GLFs; the difficulty of connecting the cause with the workers' struggle, which calls for a reflection on how to rally homosexuals and lesbians in working class neighborhoods who cannot be reached via the ghetto; and, finally, the difficulty of building a broader movement around a vast campaign for democratic rights, which requires an alliance with reform parties and groups such as Planning familial [Family Planning]. Ultimately, there is the very widespread necessity of establishing community spaces within which *gays and lesbians could meet to discuss daily life and*

⁵⁶ CNH archives, Letter to the Commission homo parisienne to the interfederal organization (Moatick, October 2, 78).

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

*actual gay experiences. [...] This would also mean defending a positive identity of homosexuality. 'Gay is good.'*⁵⁷ And to continue:

From this comes the particular place of homosexual groupings (the role that the "homosexual ghetto" plays in its way) as places where one lives, works through one's uncertainties of identity, where also one may somewhat go beyond oneself and again question expressions of one's crisis of identity, a wholly enjoyable collective activity which led to the splendors and the derision of FHAR, and which will explain uncertainties of behavior at the same time as the CONSCIOUS collective struggle will tend to transform the models chosen, with their often ambiguous ideological content. In short "living to define oneself," "living to transform oneself"... [...] Such are the foundations of homosexual oppression, a crisis of identity tracked and sanctioned in all spheres of social reality up to and including the homosexual himself (herself), which lay the foundation for the necessity of an autonomous movement, a dialectical detour going beyond partial, obsessional and traumatized identifications. [...] To identify the homosexual movement to be built up, we must start with the dual aspect of the "political and daily" struggle of homosexuals which involves a double function of the GLHs: on one hand, fulfilling POLITICAL OBJECTIVES in terms of slogans and demands and, on the other hand allowing for the COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION of the identity crisis which is part of this, and the questioning of it in this particular and autonomous place, in its locale, its public activities, its celebrations, and its campaigns where each 'life experience' is different, each specific 'behavior' can be heard and.... question itself.⁵⁸

All the ingredients of the rupture with the party have now come together. The idea that it is necessary to organize themselves in an autonomous movement turned towards the construction of positive identities thanks to "free spaces" reserved for gays and lesbians,⁵⁹ all allowing for them to lead unified campaigns of all the progressive forces in favor of human rights and the abrogation of repressive and discriminatory laws, now dominates (Idier 2014).

Nonetheless, the activists who came together in December also noted that most of the GLHs were losing ground, riddled with internal conflicts.⁶⁰ In Paris, the loss of impetus was obvious and the group dispersed into *Comités homosexuels d'arrondissement* (CHA [neighborhood homosexual committees]), which were short-lived. In addition, gay business (bars, discos, saunas, etc.) started to develop and from then on, those concerned found in these new places to socialize a means to improve their visibility. Finally, it was a time for homosexual press projects (Jablonsky, and Cheveau 2003), announced through the creation of *Gaie presse*,⁶¹ the initiative of Jean Le Bitoux, to launch a weekly, *le Gai pied* [the Gay Foot], the title of which was suggested by Michel Foucault. (It appeared on the newsstands beginning in April 1979). For their part, two members of the CNH, Jean-Pierre Joecker and Alain Sanzio, worked on a project of a mixed homosexual magazine with a cultural vocation.⁶²

⁵⁷ CNH archives. Circular of the CNH to DV-DS "Bilan de la rencontre homo de décembre" (January 1978). Signed by Ivan and Hymanée for the CNH.

⁵⁸ CNH archives. Circular of the CNH to DV-DS "Bilan de la rencontre homo de décembre" (January 1978). Signed Ivan and Hymanée for the CNH.

⁵⁹ On space as a fundamental dimension of the political institution of homosexual movements, please see the detailed analyses of Préaro (2014: 178).

⁶⁰ In a circular of the CNH, we learn that "we are completely unaware of what is going on in the provinces (apart from Marseille): No news from cities where we know that LCR activists are in the GLHs (Amiens, Bordeaux, and Rennes)," CNH archives, circular from the CNH secretariat (objective: report of the *Etats-généraux*, on homosexuality, April 29 1978). To DV DS and cells.

⁶¹ A group stemming from the GLH-PQ moved into a squat in the 14th arrondissement and created a short-lived magazine: *Gaie presse*, the first venture in the imminent development of the homosexual press.

⁶² Interviews with Suzette Triton, Alain Sanzio and Yvan, conducted by MA.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

Subsequently, when on the eve of the 3rd conference of the LCR, the CNH published its "homosexual theses"⁶³ and they were only discussed by one political faction of the party on the basis of a text with substantial modifications⁶⁴ and when the party convention refused— by a narrow majority of 35 votes—to place these theses on the agenda for an hour of debate, with the pretext of a lack of time, it is hardly surprising that some activists of the CNH concluded that it was time to quit. Jean-Pierre Lorrain, Alain Sanzio and Michel Villon went up to the podium, read their letter of resignation in which they accuse the Ligue of wanting to build *a socialist society in which homosexuals (male or female) would have no place*⁶⁵ and announced that they had decided to continue their activism elsewhere, within the framework of a magazine, before leaving the room in a deafening silence. The three other CNH activists (Yvan from Dijon, Suzette Triton from Paris and Hymanée from Marseille) were supportive of this position, denouncing the Ligue's irresponsible behavior. Nonetheless, believing that only a socialist revolution would permit the eradication of the roots of oppression of which homosexuals (male and female) were victims, they decided to remain in the Ligue, at the same time as proclaiming that they would be joining the editorial board of the new magazine, the first issue of which would be sold at the May 1st parade in Paris in 1979.⁶⁶

Now half its former size, the CNH remained active, both in the still existing GLHs and especially in Marseille where Hymanée founded the Universités d'été homosexuelles [Summer Homosexual Universities], investing heavily in a new umbrella organization, the CUARH (comité d'urgence anti répression homosexuelle [Emergency Homosexual Anti-Repression Committee]) which brought together existing groups and which attempted to bring forward all the demands made during the last decade, largely by uniting the forces of the left in a campaign which reached its apogee on April 4, 1981, in Paris, when 10,000 demonstrators participated in the national march for homosexual rights and liberties to encourage candidates to commit to eliminating legal discrimination against homosexuals. As for lesbians, they did not find a place in the CUARH and continued to develop into an increasingly autonomous movement. At the start of 1981, "radical" lesbians, returning to the slogan of Monique Wittig according to which "lesbians are not women"(Wittig 1980: 59),⁶⁷ officially left the feminist movement.⁶⁸ They created the Front des lesbiennes radicales [Radical Lesbian Front], and then the Movement d'information et d'expression des lesbiennes (MIEL-Movement of Lesbian Information and Expression). Finally, the monthly *Lesbia* started to appear on the newsstands in 1982. The links with the gay movement were stretched just as thinly, and this also applied to the concomitant development of the cult of the virile homosexual (Lerch 2003:316).

⁶³ CNH, "Thèses Homosexualités," Nov. 19 1978.

⁶⁴ CNH archives, Letter from the Commission nationale homo to the Commission paritaire [Parity Commission][to prepare the Convention] (Moatik, 08/01/1979); Letter from Yvan to the BP and the T4 political faction (January 19, 1979). Ivan also produced a text comparing the initial version of the theses word for word to the modified version to underscore the unacceptable nature of these so-called aesthetic modifications. CNH archives, "Lecture comparée des deux versions des thèses homo" (written by Yvan).

⁶⁵ Rq 848 of January 29 1979 and Rq n° 852, 2/3/February 4 1979, which published this text and in parallel that of the 3 CNH activists who decided to remain in the Ligue.

⁶⁶ *Masques, Revue des homosexualités*, n°1, May 1979.

⁶⁷ This article was presented initially in the form of an oral report by the author in New York in 1978, was published for the first time in 1980 in the journal *Question Féministes*.

⁶⁸ On the political history of lesbians and lesbian movements, please see Chetcuti, Michard (2003), Archives Recherches Cultures Lesbiennes (2009). On radical lesbianism, please see Chetcuti, Chartrain (2010).

Conclusion

We hope that, in the course of this article, we have been able to demonstrate the extent to which our starting point was false. This illustrates, once again, how the memory of the 68 Years is particularly distorted and has been subject to diverse and varied reappropriation (Sommier 1994). Behind the "official" image of the LCR as a party having promised a commitment to so-called marginal struggles, appears a reality which is rather different, a story of denial, prejudice and neglect.

There is also a strong connection apparent between the emergence of the homosexual movement in the last third of the 1970s and the decline of the feminist movement, the same as between the male and female homosexual movements, and the feminist and lesbian movements. This needs to be further explored. These are all matters calling for an extensive investigation into multi-organizational fields (Curtis, Zurcher 1973) in which individuals and groups find themselves, and the manner in which they reconfigure themselves according to the arenas⁶⁹ in which they collaborate or confront each other.⁷⁰ Thus, it is difficult to understand the relationships between the feminist movement and the GLHs without taking into account the manner in which the lesbian question faced genuine resistance within them, reflecting a redoubled exclusion, or again the relationships between the feminist movements/the lesbian movement and the gay movement without considering the profound divergences appearing around the question of pederasty/pedophilia from 1977 to 1978⁷¹. Finally, it is impossible to comprehend the trajectory of the CNH and its main protagonists within the LCR, that is to say, the manner in which it is determined what can be said and what cannot be said, the acceptable or the unacceptable for the dissenters, as for the leaders of the party, without considering the existence of a women's movement, certainly relegated to the margins and already in decline, but whose mere existence limited what was conceivable politically, by offering an overarching framework which was both enabling and constraining (for example, on the question of oppression), a political experience on which to reflect (the MLACs, the cartelization, the "separatist" (single-sex) groups and the consciousness raising groups) and action strategies (political intervention organized through sectors; avant-garde/mass movement, etc.).

More prosaically, what our scrutiny of the CNH archives suggests to us is the

⁶⁹ Our conception of the notion of an arena is closer to Strauss's definition of it as a « *'negotiated order,'* which emerges, takes shape and stabilizes within interactions, both within and between organizations (Cefaï 2007: 104 ; Strauss 1978: 124 ; 1982 ; 1984) than to Gusfield's definition (1963, 1981). We define an arena as « a space both concrete (i.e., from a dramaturgical perspective, the place and time of the staging of interactions, for example, the street or a courtroom) and symbolic (that is from a rhetorical perspective, the site of the polemics or the controversy, of testimony, expertise and deliberation) which brings together all the players, individual or complex, participating in the emergence, definition and resolution of a problem. The arenas do not exist at the time the problem appears. It is the emergence of a problem which generates its contours as a function of individuals and groups which intervene in the situation, and mobilize a specific part of the social world or field, either openly or discretely » (Duyvendack, Fillieule 2014).

⁷⁰ It is with this question in particular that the Sombrero research project is concerned, aiming to reconstruct the space of relations between families of movements and between groupings within each family in the 1968 Years in five French cities. Please see : http://www.unil.ch/files/live/sites/iepi/files/shared/crapul/SOMBRERO_WEBPAGE.pdf.

⁷¹ Due to the lack of space we do not delve further into this important question that is at the heart of the split between women and lesbian movements and gay movements. On this question, see Verdrager 2013.

Paper to be presented at the 2015 ECPR general conference. Montréal (S37P351). Preliminary version.

extent to which the extreme-left in the 1968 Years—including its most open elements—remained profoundly immured, through ideological dogmatism, in the political framework of traditional activism, incapable of understanding that the existential demands of oppressed groups could no longer be expressed in the classical forms of protest (the divide between public and private, political and personal, and activist subjectification), finally lagging behind some movements which had effectively given rise to a silent revolution, whether this was of the feminist movement, the gay and lesbian movement, or the ecological movement and perhaps even of the community movement.

Moreover, it was only at the moment when, with the CUARH, it was possible to fight on this homosexual question using a familiar framing (the struggle against discrimination and for human rights rather than desire and identity politics), based on legitimate and customary modes of action (a vast campaign with petitions and demonstrations rather than gay and lesbian centers or consciousness raising groups) and with a classic strategic horizon (the electioneering perspective of mobilizing homosexuals with a view to the victory of François Mitterrand in the presidential elections of May 1981 rather than attacking heterosexism) that the LCR engaged a little less timidly in the battle. This was at the risk of contributing to the dissolution of the most revolutionary elements of the gay and lesbian movement in the routine of classic political game playing. Christian de Leusse, of the GLH Marseille, expressed this well in a text critiquing the very young CUARH, and his analyses were to prove accurate:

"Some believe they have found the miraculous cure for the relaunching of the homosexual movement in attempting to focus on the fight against repression [...]. Thus, what must be stressed, is that such an evolution also permits those accustomed to political activism to situate the battle of homosexuals along known axes: we mobilize people against repression, and we progress in a political confrontation, thus, familiar ground to all those who learned to protest in other places [...]. In turn, the CUARH risks being a fleeting presence if, taking the torch from the entire Parisian movement, it deceives itself with respect to its capacity to recreate the homosexual movement when it is merely an expression of it [...]. Homosexuals expect too much from the homosexual movement for it to be left only in the hands of "activists."⁷²

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⁷² Christian du GLH de Marseille, « Réflexions sur le CUARH », *Gai Pied*, n° 12, March 1980 :7. Please see also the first issue of *Masques* (May 1979) which stresses this point. Especially the editorial (p. 86), Alain Sanzio, « Splendeurs et misères des gais 80... Une page de tournée », *ibidem* : 58, Alain Sanzio, Jean Boyer, « La militance gaie, un monde à inventer », *ibidem* : 100 or, two years later, Jean Boyer, « Attention à la marche », *Masques*, n° 9/10, été 1981, numéro spécial « Homosexualités 1971-1981 ».

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