The Libidinal Constitution of a High-Risk Social Movement: Affectual Ties and Solidarity in the HUK Rebellion, 1946 to 1954

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The dominant theoretical paradigms in social-movement research usually neglect the influence of affectual and sexual relationships on collective action. Drawing on the psychoanalytic social theory of Philip Slater (1963, 1977), I employ a "libidinal economy" perspective to explore the effects of such relationships on the Communist-led HUK rebellion in the Philippines (1946–1954). I argue that affectual relationships eroded the solidarity of this exclusive and high-risk social movement. The libidinal constitution (i.e., the structure and "economy" of the affectual ties) of the HUK movement's predominantly male activists—including cadres of the Communist Party of the Philippines—undermined their collective identity and discipline. The "libidinal opportunity structure" created by these activists' affectual and sexual ties allowed emotional or "libidinal withdrawal" from, and weakened identification with, this insurgency, thereby contributing to its eventual disintegration. I call for a "return of the repressed" within social-movement theory, that is, for the incorporation of sexual and affectual ties into our theoretical perspectives and empirical research.

If the modern era is characterized by "a veritable discursive explosion" (Foucault 1978:17) about sexuality, then social-movement theory remains deeply embedded in the ancien régime. Judging from the dominant theoretical paradigms in social-movement research, neither sexual relationships nor affectual ties more generally would appear to have much influence on participants in social movements; the indexes of several recent volumes on collective action—Morris and Mueller (1992); Laraña, Johnston, and Gushfield (1994); Tarrow (1994) and McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996)—reveal not a single reference to, let alone an extended discussion of, "emotion," "affect," "sex," or "sexuality.""

The neglect of what I call, following Freud (1921) and Hart (1959), the "libidinal constitution" of social movements (i.e., the structure and "economy" of their members' affectual and sexual ties) is both surprising and unnecessary. After all, the rapid growth of social-movement research since the 1960s has coincided with a growing interest in the social construction of both emotions and sexualities (Harré 1986; Stein 1990). What might be described as the sexually and emotionally repressed character of the dominant paradigms

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Liberation of Social Movements

In general, and also devotion to the "solidarity of its its own members, of concrete objects and to abstract ideas," 89 (p. 48) and "collective" 89 (p. 48) (p. 49)

The author then goes on to discuss the role of solidarity in social movements, mentioning the importance of collective identity and the necessity of group cohesion. They argue that solidarity is a key factor in the success of social movements, as it allows members to work together towards a common goal.

The text also touches on the concept of "collective identity," noting that it is not just a matter of shared beliefs or values, but also includes a sense of belonging and a willingness to act in the interest of the group. The author suggests that this sense of collective identity is crucial for the sustainability and growth of social movements.

Overall, the passage emphasizes the importance of solidarity and collective identity in the context of social movements, highlighting their role in shaping the actions and objectives of these groups. The author's analysis suggests that these factors are essential for the success and growth of social movements, and that they play a critical role in shaping the discourse and practices of these groups.
AN OVERVIEW AND HUK ACTIVISTS

The Huk Rebellion, as the Communist-led insurgency against the Philippine government, was characterized by the widespread use of guerilla tactics and the establishment of a network of local councils and committees. This movement was driven by a combination of social and economic grievances, as well as a desire for political and social reform. The Huk Rebellion was not just a military conflict, but also a struggle for social justice and national liberation.

The Huk Rebellion had a significant impact on Philippine society, as it challenged the existing social order and offered an alternative vision of a more equitable society. This led to a reevaluation of the role of government and the need for economic and social reforms.

The Huk Rebellion also had a significant impact on the relationship between the United States and the Philippines. The United States was concerned about the spread of communism and its influence in the region. This led to increased military and economic support for the Philippine government, as well as a tightening of the U.S.-Philippine-security treaty.

The Huk Rebellion was ultimately defeated by the Philippine government, but it left a lasting legacy of social and political change. It inspired a generation of Filipinos to continue their struggle for freedom and justice, and it paved the way for future movements for national liberation and social reform.

In conclusion, the Huk Rebellion was a significant event in Philippine history, and it continues to be a topic of study and discussion. Its impact on Philippine society and the wider region cannot be overstated, and it remains a reminder of the power of popular movements for social and political change.
PROBLEMS OF SOLIDARITY AMONG HUK ACTIVISTS

In early 1950, the Huk rebellion seemed very strong and popular. By September, the Huk rebellion had been defeated, and the war against the Huk was ensued. The Huk rebellion was crushed by the government, and the war against the Huk continued until 1953.

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about these women (Lanzona 1995), they seem to have been young single women who served as couriers, nurses, and the like; relatively few were PKP cadres.

Sexual relations raised the possibility of divided emotional commitments that could weaken the Huk movement. Accordingly, the PKP felt obliged to oversee and regulate the sexual relations of Huk activists, particularly after it had adopted a strategy of armed struggle and had placed its cadres, as well as ordinary Huk soldiers, under strict military discipline (Pomeroy 1963a:142).

Huk leaders were aware, for example, that marriages could create divided loyalties for cadres and soldiers, and so they encouraged and were authorized by the PKP to perform special “Huk marriages,” a practice that dated back to the war. The movement recast the marriage ceremony into a ritual affirmation not only of the couple’s loyalty to one another, but also of their joint commitment to the struggle. Huk marriages were “elaborate” affairs, “with the whole camp attending.”

The soldier comrades prefer to swear fidelity with their hands on those of their brides joined upon a pistol, and to take their vows under an arch of rifles held by their comrades. The marrying Swallows swear them not only to loyalty to each other, but also to loyalty to the movement, above their relationship, and to loyalty to the principle of the equality of men and women, about which he gives a lecture that is the core of the ceremony. (Pomeroy 1963a:143; italics added)

As Taruc (1953) puts it.

In our ceremonies we tried to bring forth the idea that the family must be a bulwark of democracy; and that the devotion of the couple to each other and that which is shared by the devotion of the couple to their fellow men. (P. 124)

These ceremonies, however, did not always produce the intended effect. “Ete” was a security soldier and a veteran of the anti-Japanese resistance; he was a “popular” man, according to Pomeroy, who had married, in a Huk ceremony, a young woman who served as a courier. Ete was court-martialed in July 1950 for “desertion in the face of the enemy.”

When the enemy entered the forest a few days ago he was in the unit sent to ambush them. He left the firing line without permission, merely telling the man next to him that he had a headache, and returned to camp. He said the head-

ache made him dizzy and that he was afraid of committing a blunder if a fight occurred. But everyone believes that he went back to be at the side of his wife, Anita, in a time of danger. (Pomeroy 1963a:60-61)

Ete was sentenced to death by firing squad for this transgression:

The natural impulse of a man and a wife is to protect each other. But . . . in this movement it is not the individual that counts, but the cause of all . . . If one cadre is wounded or captured, shall we risk the lives of two for a personal attachment, and thereby injure the whole? (Pomeroy 1963a:62)

The “sex problem” that most worried PKP leaders was the practice of married men informally taking a second wife in the Huk camps. Pomeroy (1963a) records that these extramarital relationships, which were known as kualingking cases, “were the source of much bitter criticism within the movement, and from families in the barriques” (p. 143). In an attempt to come up with a consistent and principled policy toward extramarital relationships—to “settle this problem on a moral plane,” as Pomeroy (1963a:143) put it—the PKP leadership drew up a remarkable policy statement entitled “Revolutionary Solution of the Sex Problem” (Poliburo Exh. 1:15). This document begins with a discussion of the history of the sex problem, noting that it first arose during the Japanese occupation. During this period, “[f]or lack of a revolutionary orientation on this problem, the Party lost some valuable cadres who were ordered liquidated even for such flimsy cases of married men flitting with female cadres . . . On the other extreme,” the document notes, “some cadres were talented in sustaining all forms of abnormal sex relationships on the flimsy ground of ‘biological necessity.’” 13 The sex problem “again projected itself . . . with the resumption of the armed struggle” after the war, “until now it has developed into a political question of importance.”

“Sex opportunism,” the document concludes, had become “trampant, especially be-

cause of the failure of the Party leadership to formulate and decide upon a scientific and a revolutionary solution to the sex problems of married cadres long separated from their families” (Poliburo Exh. O 180). To make matters worse, “it must be observed that the excitement produced by being in the firing line intensifies sex appetites.” (This argument was a common refrain in discussions of the sex problem. What, then, was to be done? The sex problem, the document maintains, could not be approached with “feudal” or “bourgeois” notions of morality, but had to be resolved “with the interest of the revolution as the sole criterion, and with a view to laying the foundations of future communist sex morality.”

In other words, the purely “private” interests and desires of the individuals involved in extramarital sexual relationships had to be subordinated to the collective interests of the revolutionary movement. In addition, a “scientific” solution of the sex problem had to recognize that although “sex desires can be sublimated, . . . [they] cannot be completely eliminated short of actual removal of the organs from which the desire is generated.”

The document then notes, “it is also demonstrated scientifically that removal of such organs produces abnormal results not conducive to the full development of one’s faculties” (Poliburo Exh. 1:15). Neither celibacy nor eunuchism, then, were judged to be “scientifically” correct solutions to the Huk movement’s sex problem. 14

Given the preceding arguments and assumptions, it is hardly surprising that the Party’s “revolutionary solution” of the sex problem allowed married men to take a second wife in the Huk camps. However, the Party emphasized that such relationships were permissible only “with the observance of strict regulations” and only if they served “the interests of the movement.” Pomeroy (1963a), who participated in the formulation of the “revolutionary solution,” summarized the requirements that had to be met before a Huk activist would be allowed to take a second wife:

13 Abnormal sex relationships, which may have implied homosexuality in a predominantly Catholic society, seems to refer only to extramarital heterosexual relations. None of the documents, memoirs, or other sources that I have examined refers explicitly to homosexual practices.

14 However, celibacy and eunuchism have been used in other contexts to ensure organizational commitment and discipline (Kanter 1968; Coser 1974, chaps. 2, 10).

Firstly, a married man cannot take a forest wife unless he can convince the leading committee in the Recon [Regional Command] to which he belongs that either his health or his work are being adversely affected by absence from his wife.

Secondly, he must write to or otherwise communicate with his wife in the lowland and inform her of his intention and need to take a forest wife. He must, at the same time, under the principle of equality, give his wife the freedom to enter into a similar relationship in the barrique or city if she, too, finds herself unable to withstand the frustration.

Thirdly, the forest wife must be clearly informed that the man is already married and that their relationship will terminate when he is able to return to his regular wife. In other words, there must be no deception of the regular wife and no deception of the forest wife. If, at the end of the struggle, a man should decide that he prefers a permanent relation with the forest wife, he must completely separate from the previous wife. (Pp. 143-44)

In determining whether an extramarital relationship actually served “the interests of the movement,” the Party listed a number of factors that “should be inquired into”:

... effect of sex or emotional frustration on the health and efficiency of the cadre; possibilities of sublimating sex or emotional desire which will make unnecessary the entering into abnormal sex relationships . . . possibilities of malingering by the frustrated cadre to convince the members of the [Party] organ of the adverse effects of sex or emotional frustration. (Poliburo Exh. 115)

According to Pomeroy, the revolutionary solution of the sex problem “was not adopted without acrimonious debate.” Some cadres insisted that “lowland” wives not only ought to be informed, but ought also to give their consent to their husbands’ extramarital relationships before they could be allowed. Others argued (albeit “unscientifically”) for strict self-control and sublimation (i.e., celibacy). For his part, Pomeroy and his wife, Celia Mariano, insisted “that many men would have no problem if they had overcome their feudal outlooks and had involved their wives in the struggle beside them” (Pomeroy 1963a:144). 15

15 The Party later adopted a policy along these lines. Mariano, it should be noted, was the only
Indeed, although (or perhaps because) the Party did not challenge the "ideal" of heterosexual monogamy, not everyone was pleased with its "revolutionary solution of the sex problem." According to Pomeroy, there were cadres who thought that they could apply for a "revolutionary solution" every time they had a vagrant desire, on the grounds of being "oversexed," but they have been sharply criticized and turned down. He also notes, "A national leader of the movement from Nueva Ecija was removed from his position of leadership and reduced to the rank and file for violating the procedures of the revolutionary solution of the sex problem" (Pomeroy 1963a:144).

Taruc (1967) later wrote that the "revolutionary solution" of the sex problem was actually used to "justify" the "immoral extramarital affairs" and "transient sex relationships common among the Communist leadership" that "became a major problem in the Communist Party and the Huk movement".

Thus, despite our favorite claim that, to use Stalin's words, "Communists are people of different complexion," we are told to "be different from our class enemy." Indeed, in a sense, we were worse; we exploited our own class sisters and comrades, taking advantage of their hero-worshiping loyalty, their trusting simplicity and credulity. (P. 64)

Taruc (1967) immediately adds, "I too, had a loveless sex affair with a Communist girl..." (P. 65)
The Huk movement was an important part of the Cold War in the Philippines. The Hukbalahap, a rural communist movement, was able to recruit many farmers and peasants due to the social and economic conditions of the time. The movement was able to influence the government and the people through the use of propaganda and recruitment methods. The Huk movement was able to gain support from the local population due to the promise of land reform and better living conditions. However, the government was able to suppress the movement through violence and repression. The Huk movement eventually faded away due to a combination of internal divisions and external pressures.

**DISCUSSION**

I argue that the problems of the Huk movement in the Philippines are rooted in the historical context of the Cold War in Asia. The movement was able to gain support from the local population due to the promise of land reform and better living conditions. However, the government was able to suppress the movement through violence and repression. The Huk movement eventually faded away due to a combination of internal divisions and external pressures.
Yet such a high-risk, male-dominated movement might still have proven cohesive were it not for its peculiar libidinal opportunity structure: the affectual networks of many Huk cadres extended to "objects" beyond their comrades and their political cause. These cadres may have been "biographically available" for some forms of activism, but their sexual and familial ties hardly made them the best candidates for a high-risk insurgency. In principle, then, a male-dominated movement would also have been more solidaristic had more of its leading cadres been libidinally unattached. Weber (1922) 1978 once proposed, in fact, that the ideal "communist warrior is the perfect counterpart to the monk, whose garri- soned and communalistic life in the monastery serves the purpose of disciplining him... The communist military organization ... requires warriors without home and family" (vol. 2, p. 1153).

CONCLUSION

I began by noting that the dominant paradigms in social-movement research usually neglect affectual and sexual relationships. Yet this study suggests that the libidinal constitution of a social movement may strongly affect the collective identity and solidarity of its members. A libidinal-economy perspective is especially useful for understanding the discipline and commitment (or lack thereof) of activists who are involved in exclusive or high-risk movements or who are embedded in strong affectual networks or dyadic sexual relationships. Like certain so-called political opportunity structures, some libidinal opportunity structures can significantly hinder the effectiveness of a social movement or (perhaps) prevent it from emerging in the first place. Conversely, certain libidinal opportunity structures can strongly facilitate the organization and/or effectiveness of social movements. Aho's (1990) study of right- wing "Christian patriotism," for example, found that "a major interest in joining the patriot crusade [was]... preserving, estab-lishing, and expanding love relationships and family ties" (p. 191).

Of course, one must be extremely cautious in attempting to generalize from a single case study, and I do not suggest that sexuality or affectual networks are "naturally" corrosive of group solidarity under all conditions, as Freud sometimes suggested. I have emphasized that libidinal relations became problematic for the Huk movement because of its high-risk strategy of armed struggle combined with certain facts about PKP cadres, especially their marital status, embeddedness in strong kinship networks, and views about gender roles. Presumably, many other guerrilla armies, social movements, and political groups have also engaged in a contentious tug-of-war with other institutions and networks (including kin and kin) for the inherently limited emotional energies of their participants.

Reliable generalizations about the influence of sexual and affectual relationships on collective action must be based on many more empirical studies of this nexus than we currently possess. Still, we know from accounts of other social movements—including the civil rights, Black Power, New Left, feminist, and gay rights movements in the United States—that affectual ties and sexual relationships can be divisive as well as cohesive (Evans 1979; McAdam 1988, chap. 3; Echols 1988, chap. 5; Brown 1992; Kramer 1994). The challenge now is to accumulate more systematic information about affectual networks—which are currently treated anecdotally—and to integrate this knowledge into social-movement theory. This task requires nothing less than a "return of the repressed" to the social-movement field—the incorporation of sexualities and affectual relations into our theoretical perspectives and empirical research.

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 Appendix A. A Note on Sources

This study is based primarily on PKP documents captured by the Philippine government and on the memoirs of Luis Taruc (1955, 1967) and William J. Pomeroy and Taruc (1963a). The captured documents are available on microfilm in the Main Library of the University of the Philippines, Quezon City. Following Kerkvliet (1977), the only scholar to make extensive use of PKP documents, I refer to these documents as the "PolitiTurbo Exhibits," because the trials in which they were introduced were known as the "PolitiTurbo trials." They are identified in the bibliography by the letter and (initial) page number by which they were rather haphazardly ordered by the so-called Court of First Instance in Manila. Most of the documents have been retyped and are in English or English translations from the Visayan.

Taruc's first "autobiography" was completed in June 1949, and according to him was ghost-written by William J. Pomeroy and edited by Jose Lava, the Communist Party's General Secretary at the time, before it was sent on to the United States for publication (Pomeroy 1963a:102; Taruc 1967:7; also see Scoll 1955:152n52). Taruc's (1967) second "autobiography," by contrast, was written in prison after he had left the Communist Party, with the assistance of Douglas Hyde, a passionate anti-Communist. Pomeroy was a member of the Communist Party of the United States who participated in the Huk rebellion.

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